

BOB GUCCIONE JR. IN SARAJEVO

# SPIN

KISS

and MAKE UP

RETURN OF THE  
SUPERHEROES

BY RJ SMITH

BECK

EVERYTHING  
BUT THE GIRL

SPONGE

BUSTA RHYMES

CRAPS!

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AT THE HARD  
ROCK CASINO

BY ELIZABETH  
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# IN

Volume 12, Number 5 August 1996

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This issue is dedicated  
to the memory of 1990-1996  
Max Powers

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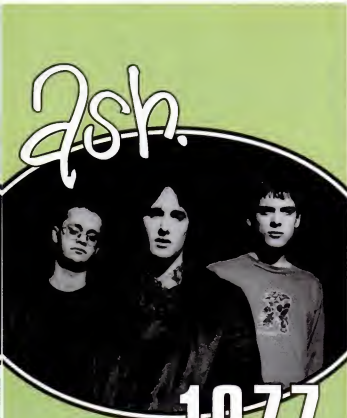
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# Su

## SUMMER ON MTV

1. Iced coffee.
2. Checking your tan line when you get out of the shower.
3. MTV's new summer season.

(3 of the things that make summer summer.)

See, while other networks go on vacation every summer and leave you with a bunch of tired old re-runs, MTV serves strictly the freshest cream of its new crop of shows. Stuff you've never seen before, like:

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Chemistry at work

## TALESPINNERS



PHIL ELLINGTON

Senior Contributing Writer RJ Smith, right, says *philogistic*—which describes a substance that spreads with the characteristics of fire—is an apt adjective to express how Kiss seeped into not just his consciousness but into that of millions of unsuspecting young Americans ["It's Alive!"]. "I wasn't a Kiss fan as a kid, but I didn't need to be one. I just absorbed them. I knew all their songs without ever once reaching to put one on," Smith, who has also written for *L.A. Weekly*, the *New York Times Magazine*, and *Details*, adds that as far as Kiss fandom goes, "there is no free choice. We've all been drafted into the Kiss Army."



AMY STEINER

"Gary Hall, Jr., is hardly your typical athlete," maintains Deb Schwartz, left, who wrote this month's "Out of Bounds" column on the artistically and sartorially inclined Olympic swimmer. When she first encountered Hall, he was busy at work on a pen-and-ink drawing of reggae pioneer Jimmy Cliff. "He definitely has mixed feelings about swimming. He ranked it as his third-favorite passion." Schwartz relates that Hall was once tested by the Chicago Bulls' former team psychologist, who determined that the shy and introverted sportsman "has the same

psychological profile as [flamboyant Bulls hoop star] Dennis Rodman." Currently a staffer at *Out*, Schwartz has contributed articles to the *Village Voice* and *The Nation*.

One thing that struck Contributing Photographer Loren Haynes, right, during his tour through Bosnia was the marked difference between the scenes he captured for this month's story on the war-ravaged nation ["Life After Wartime"], and the standard images that depict Bosnians as people with an appetite for destruction. "We've been desensitized into a 'that could never happen to us' attitude," says Haynes. "It's just human nature to remove yourself from a tragedy." Haynes was determined to downplay the "foreignness" and instead portray more universal aspects of the people of Bosnia. "It was important for me to show that life can and does go on, even in a holocaust." Haynes has shot for *The New Yorker*, *Live!*, and *Detour*.

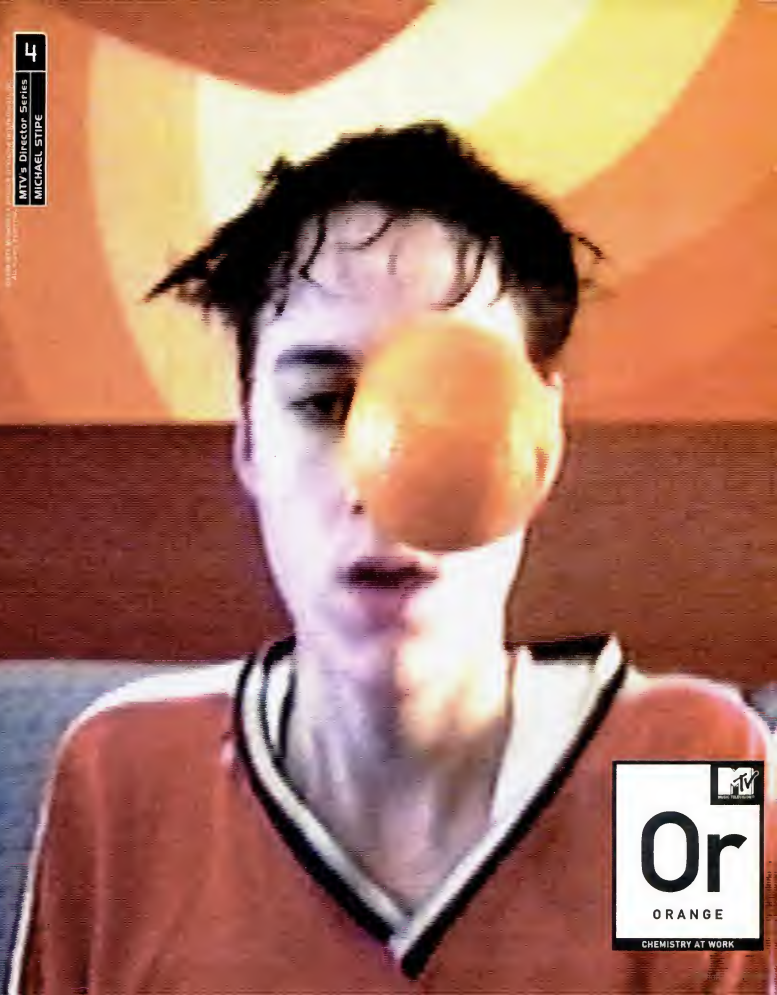


Eagerly anticipating his encounter with the man he refers to as the "Pied Piper of Slack," photographer Chris Buck, below, was surprised to find Beck quietly proclaiming an urge to be perceived as an "upstanding



citizen" ["After the Gold Rush"]. During the shoot, Beck often asked why Buck wanted him to sit or stand in a particular position. "When I explained my reasoning," says Buck, "I would see him processing the information to see if he was comfortable with what that image might represent." Buck's work has also appeared in *Entertainment Weekly*, *New York*, and *Interview*.





CHEMISTRY AT WORK

by Jerry Brown

## The Evil of Two Lessers

Playing politics with "terrorism."

THE DE FACTO ministry of culture and propaganda, a.k.a. the highly concentrated American media, has set the stage for another four years of Bill Clinton. The doleful senator from Kansas now finds himself scripted as the tired voice for the combined excesses of the Christian Coalition and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. For a second time, it turns out, Dole is going to lose to George Bush. First it was in 1988, to the real Bush in the Republican primary; now it will be to his simulacrum, a Democratic president with Bush's agenda on crime and economics.

It was only a year ago that Clinton was being written off as a bumbler who couldn't shoot straight—engulfed in his wife's convoluted health-care plans, in missteps with gays in the military, and in the deepening muck of Whitewater. But through a hyperreal process of media shift—leading to political transubstantiation—the Democratic President was lifted on high by standing still. It's miraculous. Clinton does nothing for core Democratic constituents and reneges on his pledge to revitalize American cities. Yet next to Newt Gingrich and his congressional Cro-Magnons, the President's mere gesturing is enough to look statesmanlike. The Republicans have played their parts, as if on cue, by threatening Medicare, abortion rights, clean air, and endangered species. They even made a final stand against raising the minimum wage—an issue Clinton belatedly discovered in his third year in office.

H.L. Mencken once wrote that "the whole aim of practical politics is to keep the populace alarmed...by menacing it with an endless series of hobgoblins, all of them imaginary." Clinton learned this early, and honed his ability to keep such hobgoblins on hand. A perfect case in point is the recently passed antiterrorism bill.

Two months before the Oklahoma City bombing, the President had introduced in Congress a bill



claiming to combat the threat of terrorism, as the follow-up to his earlier, much-ballyhooed anticrime bill. Both measures were lifted straight out of the Reagan-era Republican playbook. Their intent was not as advertised: to reduce crime and terrorism by filling in gaps in the criminal law and giving an impotent federal government badly needed new powers. Existing law already contained the most draconian penalties in the Western world, and our growing federal police forces enjoyed extraordinary surveillance, tactical, and prosecutorial power.

The real intent of these new Clinton proposals was totally political. Richard Nixon long ago laid down the basic campaign dictum: Never defend, always attack. Clinton, under steady attack himself, decided to shift into attack mode.

First, he caught "Three-Strikes-You're-Out" fever, to preempt the customary Republican practice of labeling Democrats as soft on crime. Then he adopted Nancy Reagan's and George

Bush's War on Drugs, appointing his own Army general to direct the attack and calling for school uniforms to set a tone of youthful conformity. His two Supreme Court appointees then provided the majority for a bizarre decision authorizing random urine testing for junior-high and high-school athletes. Never mind that all these new extensions of federal power overlap with state laws on the same subjects, affect mostly poor people, and year after year fail to achieve their promised objective. Politics is what we are talking about here, not logic.

But Bill Clinton's true genius and character shone forth in his adroit use of the terrorist issue. Hours after the Oklahoma City bombing, he assumed his best lip-biting form, providing fatherly compassion for the victims and dusting off his then-dormant antiterrorism bill as the final solution

to foreign terrorism. The fact that the bombers appeared to be homegrown was irrelevant as Congress jumped at the red meat Clinton laid before them.

By the time the antiterrorism bill arrived back on the President's desk, it contained a congressional demand for covert action against persons deemed terrorist, and 1) an evocation of the historic right of habeas corpus, ensuring that innocent people and victims of government misconduct will languish in jail and be executed; 2) the authority to deport noncitizen residents on the basis of secret evidence; 3) broad new presidential powers to blacklist unpopular organizations as "terrorist"; 4) a provision for prison sentences of up to ten years for those who contribute to the legal activities of any such designated "terrorist" group; 5) the elimination of the ban on FBI surveillance and investigation of First

Amendment activities. In short, the so-called antiterrorism law is dangerous; it codifies abuse of power and invites back the excesses of *Cointelpro*, the domestic intelligence scandal of the '70s.

Dole, Gingrich, and company are taking this country down the wrong road, toward social and ecological disaster. Tragically, the Democrats under Clinton are moving in the same direction, albeit at a different pace. I can't pick the lesser of two evils when I am confronted by the unredeemable evil of two lessers. With as much clarity as I can muster and an ever-hopeful heart, I am tending to what is within my grasp. Sooner, rather than later, it will become evident that our regal President wears no clothes. ■

Former California governor and three-time presidential candidate Jerry Brown now heads the nonprofit organization *We the People* (phone: (800) 426-1112; Web site: <http://www.wtp.org>).



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## Viva Glam!

Detroit's *Sponge* go from grunge pretenders to glitter contenders with *Wax Ecstatic*. Photograph by Rankin.

BEING THE FIRST Detroit Rock City band to hit the charts in years allows one to make certain claims. For instance, Vinnie Dombroski, the hook-nosed/orange-haired vocalist for bandwagon-grunge (though they prefer the often-more-accurate "hillbilly glam") livesome *Sponge* can get away with spilling like a wise guy: "You mean you can't hear the sound of the factories in our tunes? The exhaust of bus fumes, the sweat of unemployment—and the Big Three! I ooze that from my pores." Sitting in a pork restaurant in the boho-boutiquey suburb of

Royal Oak, Dombroski drains the last of an O'Doul's and declares: "I could fill this whole glass of pudding with the pain and suffering of the people in this city!" Trust me: This was no small pudding glass.

Dombroski also likes to boast that *Sponge* never fail to pull in all those drag queens working on the assembly lines—appropriate, since the band's latest, *Wax Ecstatic*, has not one but two ballads with the phrase "drag queen" in the title. The album is a long way from their noisy-riffed debut, *Rotting Piñata*, which held MTV by the throat last summer. It's actually a lot closer to their smash "Molly," an atypically jangled throwback



to the *Pretty in Pink* soundtrack that didn't earn the combo much respect; Dombroski jokes that he still attends a biweekly support group for second-generation grunge stars in hopes that people will stop yelling "wannabe!" at him when he's parking his car.

For Dombroski, what separates *Sponge* from the post-Seattle slew is how the band "never looked at our music as something where we need to define our manhood by being so heavy—in fact, I think we're doing some things to define our womanhood." He says that for *Wax Ecstatic* they originally planned an all-drag-queen concept album dedicated to fans in Memphis who made him feel like a transvestite outcast the last time he played there. "I took the stage and I was like, 'Hipsters, flippers, and finger-poppin'

*Soaking it up: Sponge, from left, Tim Cross, Joey Mazzola, Vinnie Dombroski, Mike Cross, and Charlie Grover.*

daddies, knock me your lobes.' And they just weren't buying it. They weren't in on that headfirst spin to death and destruction!"

Bantam guitarist Joey Mazzola claims that *Sponge*'s average fan is, in fact, in her mid-teens—not unlike Mazzola's own 13-year-old daughter Rosalyn, who with the help of *Sponge* (disguised as the nail-polish-color-monikered 27 Mauve) recorded the spunky Rapunzel/Hillary/Charo/Nico-homage single "I'm a Big Girl/Femme Fatale" last year. But Dombroski swears Mazzola's bluffing: "No, man, we play to factory workers. First we put a call into the union hall, then flyer all the cars in the neighborhoods." Would you buy a used Ford from this man?

CHUCK EDDY

## Welcome to the Acid House

Scottish novelist Irvine Welsh raves against the machine in his underworld smash, *Trainspotting*.

IRVINE WELSH IS a very brave man, or else a very stupid one. It's mid-May, and the Scottish author has ventured into what might be considered hostile territory for any serious writer: the circus of the stars known as the Cannes Film Festival. Fortunately for Welsh, he's that rare novelist who's down with the public domain. A cult celebrity in Britain, he goes pubbing with Damon Albarn from Blur, writes regularly for the British glossies, and recently cut a track with the rave outfit Primal Scream. On the Riviera for a special screening of *Trainspotting*, the startling film based on his debut novel of the same name (both out now in the U.S.), Welsh confesses that he's nearly talked out on the subject of his three-year-old bestseller. "The book is like bad curry after a few pints of lager," he explains in his pointed Scots. "It keeps coming back. But I really can't complain—it's done very well for me."

What it's done is establish Welsh as the undisputed star of a literary vanguard that has busted out of Scotland's rave scene. It was rave kids who first discovered Welsh's grisly novel, an episodic ride through a fun house filled with soccer hooligans, smack addicts, and hustlers stationed far off Britain's middle-class radar. The book soon

caught the eye of the makers of the art-house hit *Shallow Grave*, who, with Welsh's blessing, turned *Trainspotting* into a box-office Goliath in Britain. Suddenly, Welsh's marginalized low-lives had been mainstreamed.

The author had once been headed for mainstream respectability himself after a brief stint with heroin in the mid-80s. He had a white-collar job. He took business classes. Then raves hit. "I had become very antidrugs, so at first I was very down on the whole Ecstasy scene. But then I got into it and it really energized my life—it's the only place where people's collective personas are realized." Soon Welsh began writing. "I wanted to capture on paper the whole rave atmosphere of being taken on a kind of journey. To keep the pages turning, to keep the action moving, just like a DJ."

Welsh's primary concern now is to keep his writing subversive. "I'd hate to become the kind of writer who's read as an affirmative thing, who just gives you what you want," he says. "If that ever happened, I'd probably just write for the movies." In fact, his agenda in Cannes includes more than just another tedious round of promotion; he's also there to pitch a new screenplay. Now that's brave.

L.C. SMITH





foot locker



Honey,  
what's a  
Choad?





# Finding Their Religion

## The Top 40 gets closer to God.

With spirituality on the rise, new notions of the divine are cropping up all over; not just in infomercials and cheesy airport paperbacks but in pop songs as well. Here, with the help of Mark McClain Taylor, a professor at Princeton Theological Seminary, we examine some recent instances of divine intervention.

KEITH BLANCHARD

	FUGEES "Manifest / Outro"	JEWEL "Who Will Save Your Soul?"	DISHWALLA "Counting Blue Cars"	JOAN OSBORNE "One of Us"	DOG'S EYE VIEW "Everything Falls Apart"
LYRIC	"I woke up this morning I was feeling kinda high / It was me, Jesus Christ, and Hale Selassie... / ...Christ took a sip of the amaretto passed it down the table."	"We're so worried about saving our souls / Afraid that God will take his toll / That we forget to begin."	"Tell me all your thoughts on God / Cuz I'd really like to meet her / Ask her why we're who we are..."	"What if God was one of us / Just a slob like one of us / Just a stranger on a bus / Tryin' to make his way home?"	"I met God this afternoon / Riding on an uptown train / I said, 'Don't you have something better to do?' / He said, 'If I do my job, what would you complain about?'"
SPIRITUAL CRISIS	Did the Lord party?	Why does organized religion, with its cloying rules and ceremonies, actually stunt our spiritual growth?	 What if God is a woman?	Could even the craziest stewbarn on the subway—no, that guy, over there, with the diaper on his head—be an incarnation of the divine?	Is God nothing more than a particularly lazy slumlord with five billion disgruntled tenants?
METAPHYSICAL ANALYSIS	"Our Puritan tradition has strongly downplayed this aspect, but Jesus, for one, did party. He feasted with tax collectors and sinners; he ate, drank, and made merry with anyone who could connect with him on that level. That's what got him in trouble: this radically inclusive love that violated the sensibilities of the elite."	"Established religion in the U.S. is in a downward plunge, according to all the indicators, even as there's an incredible inter-religious spiritual vitality rising across the continent. Ironically, the Jesus movement itself was spiritually pitched against an established religious order that had really held a lot of people back from meaningful spiritual inquiry."	"The patriarchal Protestant religions are fairly intoxicated with the idea of God as male: As long as God is only male, then only men can be considered godlike. But if God can be imagined as female, then women can participate in the sacred, too."	"Jesus of Nazareth was seen as a slob: a Jewish peasant using rural folk wisdom to talk about the sacred. Some believe God's love for all has to be acutely vigilant about the most marginalized, because they are the frayed edges of the fabric of human civilization, and from that point of fraying, the entire fabric could come apart."	"This lyric feels like somebody finally giving up on the absentee father that's never coming home. It's very much in the tradition of Deism, which sees God as a watchmaker who winds the universe up, then lets it tick without intervening."
ARTIST'S RESOLUTION	Why not, mon?	The unexamined soul, Jewel decides, is not worth saving.	 God is beyond gender distinctions—just like RuPaul—and his/her female aspect might just give peace, love, and the Family Leave Act a chance.	If God ever did possess some poor bastard, maybe then he'd feel our pain.	Sure, it'd be nice to get pampered down here, but it ain't gonna happen. So quit whining and grow up.

## Natural One

### The Natural Law Party promises a kinder, mellower nation.

ANXIOUS FOR SOMETHING other than the increasingly similar politics du jour served up by the Republicans and Democrats? Crime, economic instability, and health-care reform making you *totally* tense? Maybe it's time to meditate in the direction of this year's third-party option, the Natural Law Party, and its candidate for president, Dr. John Hagelin.

Set to be on the ballot in all 50 states this fall, the Natural Law Party offers "policies and programs in harmony with the laws of nature." Accordingly, its platform trumpets lowering taxes, pursuing alternative energy sources, and most notably, reducing societal stress through the widespread use of Transcendental Meditation (TM) and Yogic Flying—techniques fostered by one of the party's founding fathers, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the Indian spiritual guru who led the Beatles on their famed magical mystery tour.

"America is in the grip of an epidemic of stress," says Hagelin, a 41-year-old research physicist and audio engineer. "Transcendental Meditation and Yogic Flying are simple meditation techniques; you sit comfortably, eyes closed for about 20 minutes, and attain a state much deeper than sleep. It translates into

clearer, more purposeful thinking and action, and can help people better cope with today's stressful lifestyle."

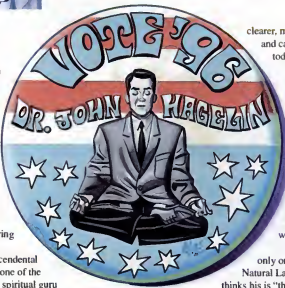
A Hagelin-led administration would tackle stress issue by weighty issue.

Education: a new curriculum featuring cosmology and unified field theory, plus "we would vastly improve school lunches." Crime: meditation classes for prisoners. Abortion: Not having the right to choose is very stressful. And, claiming drugs are "enormously stressful," Hagelin would have a strong antidrug policy, but does admit to inhaling "more than once while still a youth."

Groovy, no? Although Hagelin won only one percent of the vote under the

Natural Law banner in the '92 election, he thinks his is "the third party to beat" come November, and is prepared for the seemingly daunting task of mellowing out an entire nation. "I would go to military bases and introduce TM to anywhere between 5,000 and 7,000 troops. With several such groups practicing TM twice a day, the whole atmosphere of the country would be influenced. That's all we would need to cool things down."

ZEV BOROW





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## Manic Street Preacher

Busta Rhymes, hip-hop's reigning court jester, is ready to take the throne.

UNDER THE HOT lights of a film stage, Busta Rhymes is finding *foam*: a bit...moist. "Help!" he yells. "Pat me down!" That crazy, Al Jolson-meets-Shabba Ranks voice carries easily over the din of bustling PAs and key grips, here to shoot a video for "It's a Party," the second single off Busta's modestly titled *Just a Little Bit of The Coming*. And while sipping champagne with the Zhané girls has got to beat sharing a straitjacket with Ol' Dirty Bastard—see "Woo-Hah!! Got You All In Check (remix)"—the biggest, grinningest, most explosive face in rap music indeed appears

to have broken a sweat. "Yo! M-A-A-A-KEUP!" The hip-hop expression "blowin' up" has never applied more literally than it does to Busta Rhymes. The rapper has proved virtual nitroglycerine as a guest star, firing the latter verses of A Tribe Called Quest's "Scenario" and Craig Mack's "Flava In Your Ear (Remix)" into outer space like some Acme Ballistic Missile. And now, with his platinum single "Woo-Hah!!," Busta looks to be staking a serious claim on the Jeeps of Summer. Mixing a kitten-on-the-keys piano loop, warped pop-culture references, and one of the most crazy-ass vocal styles in rap history,

"Woo-Hah!!" reveals an MC whose hard-core versatility shares little with sullen gangstas or grim street reporters—or any discernible rap trend at all.

Which raises the question: Just where the hell does he get this stuff? The 24-year-old Leader of the New School is quick with a list of old-school inspirations: "Secret Squirrel, Tom and Jerry, Courageous Cat," Rhymes says in a raspy but surprisingly sane speaking voice. "A lot of the old shit, too—Popeye, Mighty Mouse. That shit just stays on at my crib 24 hours."

Otherwise, Busta's off-hours are surprisingly average. Dwelling in his native Brooklyn, the rapper enjoys "normal, middle-class, standard-living shit like how I came up." His one connection to the bizarre is his three-year-old son, Tiziah. "That's the coolest age to be around kids," he says.

"They don't bicker, they're not looking for their moms, they just want to chill." And, of course, they have impeccable taste in music. "Yeah, you know he's singing the 'Woo-Hah!!' shit," he laughs. "When the beat comes on, he's with it."

CHRIS NORRIS

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## Crazy Horse

Sparklehorse's Mark Linkous finds there's life after near-death.



Mark Linkous  
on a wing  
and a chair.

SPARKLEHORSE FRONTMAN Mark Linkous is in admirably high spirits for someone who was recently declared clinically dead. Four months after an accident that nearly cost him his legs, he's rolling his wheelchair around a San Francisco Denny's as he recounts a recent spat with a heckler. "We were opening for Cracker and this guy kept shouting at us to play some music," Linkous recalls. "I challenged him to come up onstage, but what was I going to do? Run over his toes repeatedly? Kick him in the shins?" The night before, he had taken on another wise guy at the Fillmore, a place he claims is haunted. "It has that spooky smell," he says.

What's truly haunted is Sparklehorse's music. The evocative *vivadiexubmarine* transmission plot is crawling with musical ghosts—bittersweet country melodies, sparkling Big Star quotes, and a lyrical sense that's equal parts Frank Black and Neil Young. Recorded mostly at Linkous's Virginia farmhouse studio, the album rattles and clanks with what he calls "sounds that make my heart feel beautiful and sad."

If the rollicking radio contender "Someday I Will Treat You Good" doesn't seem to fit with Linkous's melancholy wonder, it's because it was actually penned during his days with a forgettable NYC pop band called the Dancing Hoods. He left after a nervous breakdown pitched him back to Virginia, and eventually some homemade tapes made it into Capitol's hands with the help of Linkous's old friend, David Lowery of Cracker. Then, just after the album's release, came the accident.

Jet-lagged after a show in London, Linkous crossed Vallum with his prescription antidepressants and passed out on a hotel bathroom floor. "My legs were pinned under me, accumulating toxic fluids for 14 hours," Linkous explains solemnly. "The doctors said I went into cardiac arrest until electroshock brought me back to life." As for near-death visions, Linkous can't even remember flying to England. "I could have been abducted by aliens for all I know."

He'll always have to wear braces on his ankles, although he expects to walk again in a year. But those strangely thick eyeglasses Linkous wears on stage serve no therapeutic purpose. "I saw an ad of some model making a statement with these high-fashion welding goggles," he says. "And I thought, if she can wear them, why can't I?"

—SIA MICHEL



# AIRWALK

## ACTION SPORTS HEROES





COMIX



## Rebel With a Cause

David Wojnarowicz lashes out at the naked city in *Seven Miles a Second*.

*SEVEN MILES A SECOND* is the graphic autobiography of the late artist and AIDS activist David Wojnarowicz, a street kid who grew into the kind of provocateur most Americans would prefer not to run into—the kind that won't shut up. Instinctively angry at anyone who's blind to the ravages of AIDS and the chasms of class, Wojnarowicz carries a blistering, unrelenting rage "like a blood-filled egg." But behind the rage is a deep compassion: in a city of junkies, pre-ops, and whores, the narrator is on an endless search for human decency.

*Seven Miles* opens with a pubescent Wojnarowicz being picked up by a horny businessman in New York City's Times Square. The scene goes from

seedy to sickening when the boy is forced to watch a prostitute service a john while his own trick goes down on him. As Wojnarowicz stumbles from hustler to starving thief, his dream world—rendered with ethereal, psychedelic perspective by collaborator James Romberger—becomes increasingly liberating. In one remarkable spread, Wojnarowicz pictures himself towering over Fifth Avenue, smashing St. Patrick's Cathedral. "We're expected to quietly and politely make house in this windstorm of murder, but I say there's certain politicians that better get more complex security alarms."

By story's end, Wojnarowicz, suffering from AIDS, "can't abstract my own dying any longer...no gesture can touch me." It's a ferociously lonely moment, but Romberger insists it couldn't have been any other way. "David wanted to end with a sunny day, all positive," Romberger says, explaining how he spent ten years assembling and drawing the book from the writings of Wojnarowicz, who died of AIDS in 1992. "But there was nothing in his writing that would allow me to do it. He was just filled with rage."

Despite the book's occasionally explicit subject matter, Romberger is adamant about getting it out to a lot of people. "It's about the alienation that every smart kid goes through," he says. "But that old guy giving him a blowjob looks like it'll keep it out of Barnes & Noble."

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# Laugh, Riot

Get set for Sleater-Kinney—riot grrrls who've rediscovered the pleasure principle.

"THE SONGS THAT I wrote in Heavens to Betsy were like 'I'm going to kill you, I'm going to gouge your out your eyes. I'm a terrorist,'" says singer Corin Tucker, who's moved on from leading that riot grrrl band to a more joyously rocking one, Sleater-Kinney. "And those were really important to me, in terms of survival. But learning to be a little bit less self-righteous, to not always be writing a slogan, is an important thing in a songwriter."

Tucker, 23, was barely out of high school when Bikini Kill ignited the riot grrrl movement in Olympia, Washington, in 1991, and the two-piece Heavens to Betsy—also formed there that

year—joined in with the fervor of upended teenyboppers. "My Red Self" swailed

menstruation; other tunes swore "I want you dead" and "All I know is anger." Primal and riveting, Heavens to Betsy nevertheless often suffocated; even now, Tucker has the measuring eyes of a punk fundamentalist.

Her salvation from salvation has been former H2B groupie Carrie Brownstein, two years younger and the self-confessed "classic-rock freak" of the band who persuaded Tucker to cover "More Than a Feeling" and who, when asked if she'd like to be known as a guitar goddess, burbles: "Totally." Brownstein's former band, Excuse 17, featured shared vocals, two guitars, and heavier drumming—moves toward pleasure that Sleater-Kinney also benefits from. Tucker's ex-lover (from when the two began cowriting in 1994), Brownstein covers the singer's funk as she explores new sides of herself.

Call the Doctor, Sleater-Kinney's second album, offers something more radical than the breaking of social conventions—the breaking of self-imposed ones. "I Wanna Be Your Joey Ramone" surges so hard it's only half-satiric. And Tucker's singing—the most totally micronance of any riot grrrl's—is more exultantly musical than ever.

For Brownstein, Sleater-Kinney is empowering when overpowering. "To be out of my head for a while and realize I'm the one that's making this happen—this sound that's filling this space is coming from me," Tucker the punk veteran, knows such release has to be won. "A real question for me is how much am I willing to let go of things, and how much can I like the dynamic of sometimes being able to, and sometimes not being able to. That's reality." **ERIC WEISBERG**

Grrrl crazy: from left, Carrie Brownstein, Corin Tucker, and drummer Toni Gogin.





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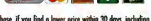
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## SOUNDBITES

by Julia Chaplin



The late Brad Nowell of Sublime.

SUBLIME LEAD SINGER and guitarist **Brad Nowell** was added to the long list of musician drug fatalities on May 25, and Depeche Mode's **David Gahan** had a narrow escape just days later. The 28-year-old Nowell was found dead of an apparent heroin overdose in a San Francisco hotel room after a night of partying hours before the band was set to perform at a local club. Nowell—in and out of drug rehab since

1992—had just recorded Sublime's eponymous third LP.

Gahan, 34, was arrested after he overdosed on cocaine and heroin May 28. The singer was rushed to Cedars Medical Center for treatment after he was found lying on the floor in his room at the Sunset Marquis Hotel in Los Angeles, according to police. Gahan was later booked on charges of possession and being under the influence of a controlled substance. The singer was hospitalized last August after slashing his wrists in a suicide attempt.



Am I the Antichrist? Marilyn Manson (left) and Trent Reznor

## Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This?)

Sleep deprivation and "pain-threshold rituals" might not seem like ideal recording conditions, but that's what **Marilyn Manson** claims it took to finish the band's next album, *Antichrist Superstar*. After months holed up with **Trent Reznor** in his converted New Orleans funeral parlor, and losing guitarist Daisy Berkowitz to "creative differences," eponymous frontman Manson's ambitions have only grown loftier: "Hopefully, I'll be remembered as the person who brought an end to Christianity."

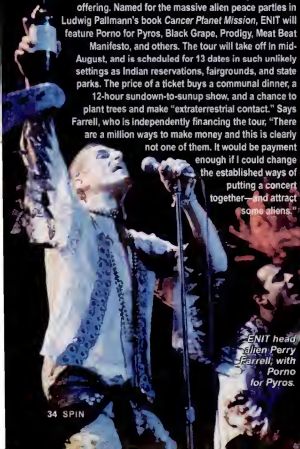
● Fed up with the bottom-line mentality of the record industry, **Tori Amos** has founded her own label, Igloo Records. Bankrolled by Atlantic, the infant label will give Amos and longtime manager Arthur Spivak carte blanche to sign new acts. "I got signed to Atlantic

in 1985 because I was in a teased-hair band," explains Amos, who has sold more than five million albums with little radio airplay. "No one even knew I could play piano. When I recorded 'Little Earthquakes,' everyone's jaw dropped." While the deal could cost Atlantic big bucks if Amos's faves turn out to be commercial flops, label boss Val Azzoli isn't worried: "The records may not be No. 1 singles, but they'll definitely be critically acclaimed." Igloo's first release will be by Pet, whose female vocalist, Amos claims, can scream like AC/DC.

● **R.E.M.** recently announced the end of its 16-year association with manager and "fifth member" Jefferson Holt, who helped the band grow from a struggling Georgia college act into a multipatinum supergroup. Neither Holt nor band members would comment on the split; the band stated only that Holt would not be replaced immediately and that R.E.M.'s business would continue to be handled by attorney Bertis Downs. Sources close to R.E.M. say the band is negotiating a seven-figure settlement with Holt in an attempt to avoid a lawsuit. In September, R.E.M. will release the final record on its Warner Bros. contract, which should make the band—which has sold more than 30 million albums—the most sought-after free agent in the business.

## Love American Style

Equal parts Rainbow Gathering, rave, and Outward Bound, Perry Farrell's ENIT festival should be this summer's truly alternative offering. Named for the massive alien peace parties in Ludwig Pallmann's book *Cancer Planet Mission*, ENIT will feature Porno for Pyros, Black Grape, Prodigy, Meat Beat Manifesto, and others. The tour will take off in mid-August, and is scheduled for 13 dates in such unlikely settings as Indian reservations, fairgrounds, and state parks. The price of a ticket buys a communal dinner, a 12-hour sundown-to-sunup show, and a chance to plant trees and make "extraterrestrial contact." Says Farrell, who is independently financing the tour: "There are a million ways to make money and this is clearly not one of them. It would be payment enough if I could change the established ways of putting a concert together—and attract some aliens."



ENIT head, alien Perry Farrell, with Porno for Pyros.



U2: even better than the Zoo thing.

## Mission Accomplished

As **U2** puts the finishing touches on its first album since 1993's *Zooropa*, the Irish lads are gearing up for the eagerly anticipated October release by planning one of the most ambitious tours in history. According to manager Paul McGuinness, the multimillion-dollar tour will kick off in April 1997, cover more than 100 cities, and last more than a year. The band may accept corporate sponsorship for the first time, possibly from Microsoft, Apple, Intel, or America Online. Meanwhile, MTV and Polygram are co-funding a pilot series called *Zoo TV*, slated to debut on MTV this fall. "People sometimes say to U2, 'I bet you'd like to go back to playing small clubs,'" says McGuinness. "The truth is, we were terrible playing clubs. U2 is big music and we like big possibilities."





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# The Ultimate Trip

David J. Prince recounts the life and times of counterculture guru **Timothy Leary**.

TIMOTHY LEARY, the philosopher, scientist, and media artist, died on May 31 at age 75 after a protracted battle with prostate cancer.

As with so many people who achieve such celebrated fame and notoriety, there were, in essence, two Timothy Learys: "Tim the Myth" and "Tim the Man." The Myth is a grand script stretching across both the globe and a good part of 20th-century popular culture: a fact/fiction hybrid of Socrates and Huck Finn; a dream of a lifetime spent pushing radical ideas, unpopular science, and evolutionary tools on a seemingly unprepared world. The Man rode the waves of change through every decade of his life without ever settling into satisfaction, was unflinching in the face of constant adversity, and found pleasure and inspiration at every hint of creativity and forward thinking. But what lifts Leary to the level of True Hero is that the Myth and the Man were always in complete harmony with each other.

Leary was born in 1920 in Springfield, Massachusetts, the only son in an Irish Catholic family. He spent two years at Holy Cross College before enrolling as a cadet at West Point. After a battle with the school authorities over an episode of drunkenness and his refusal to cooperate, Leary endured a brutal nine months of "silencing [being treated as a nonperson]" before his resignation. He spent two years as an Army psychologist in World War II, then finished his Bachelor of Arts at the University of Alabama in 1945. He received his doctorate in clinical psychology from the University of California at Berkeley, and an expansion of his doctoral thesis, published in 1957 as *The Interpersonal Diagnosis of Personality*, remains a classic of modern psychology.

In 1959, Leary was given a post as graduate professor at Harvard. During the summer of 1960, on a vacation in Mexico, he tried psilocybin mushrooms for the first time. Convinced that he'd discovered the long-sought tool for inducing quantifiable change in

psychological patients, he returned to Harvard and began scientific research on the effects of psilocybin, and later LSD, in earnest. The subjects included alcoholics, prison inmates, divinity students, graduate students, and, at the urging of psychedelic advocate Aldous Huxley, the leading artists and cultural shapers of the time. Thus, Leary turned on a broad sweep of popular figures, including beats Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs, and Jack Kerouac; jazz musicians Maynard Ferguson, Miles Davis, and

boom generation, before being handed a 10-year prison sentence (for possession of \$10 worth of marijuana). Leary subsequently made a daring escape to Europe; he spent time with Eldridge Cleaver in Algiers, was a guest of the Hermann Hesse family in Switzerland, and was finally captured in Afghanistan and returned to a maximum-security prison, where he once occupied the cell next to Charles Manson.

After being released from prison in 1976, Leary embarked on a never-ending lecture tour of college campuses, nightclubs, and conferences. He fearlessly opened his heart and his mind to new ideas: From S.M.I.L.E. (Space Migration, Intelligence Increase, Life Extension) to computers to virtual reality to cryonics to designer dying,

Leary took on culture at its edges. As his health failed, he approached the Internet and his World Wide Web site (<http://www.leary.com>) with cantankerous enthusiasm, encouraging people to use computers for interpersonal communication.

During the last years of his life, Leary transformed his own home into a salon; a kaleidoscopic coterie of admirers spanning generational, educational, and cultural lines passed through Leary's always-unlocked door, to engage in

conversation on topics ranging from the Los Angeles Dodgers to Jack Kerouac's lack of style.

On his deathbed, Leary briefly regained consciousness while surrounded by nearly 20 friends and family members. He asked a question, "Why?" and answered it himself: "Why not." He then repeated the answer, over and over like a mantra, examining the myriad ways those two words can be interpreted. While he may have been referring to his own death just hours away, it's more likely he was repeating the words he'd said to himself at each important juncture of his life; repeating the words he'd given as inspiration to so many others; repeating the words of any person who has dared to think for himself and question authority.

David J. Prince has coauthored a book with Timothy Leary on Leary's last years, *Death: The Ultimate Trip Is due out from HarperCollins in early 1997.*



Dizzy Gillespie; and actors Cary Grant and Marilyn Monroe, among hundreds of others.

Leary's enthusiasm for and belief in the power of psychedelics was infectious, and the drugs soon made their way out of the research facilities and onto the streets. Dismissed from Harvard in 1963, he set up the Millbrook research facility in upstate New York to continue his work. The experiments, though, inspired by Eastern mysticism and rock'n'roll, drew the ire of local authorities, including then-Dutchess County District Attorney G. Gordon Liddy, who harassed and arrested Leary several times. By that point, Leary had attracted the fame normally reserved for musicians and artists; his infamous light shows and embrace of psychedelia were taken seriously by both the young generation he urged to "Turn On, Tune In, and Drop Out," and by the establishment as represented by then-President Richard Nixon, who labeled him "the most dangerous men in America."

In 1969, Leary began a campaign for governor of California, participated in John Lennon's Bed-in for Peace, and made hundreds of appearances as the spiritual and cultural leader of the baby-









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## YOKO ONO/IMA

Irving Plaza  
New York City  
May 14, 1996

DISMISSED BY MOST of her husband's fans, hated by some, and widowed by one, Yoko Ono, amazingly, let his bereaved public use her life to make sense of his death. No doubt some of the crowd who squeezed into Irving Plaza, where Ono took her

first knock tour in years after her New York debut at the Knitting Factory two months before, were eager to continue the arrangement. But the incredibly vital, surprisingly short, lithe 63-year-old who showed us her haircut and her earrings and the junk in her jeans—in between songs about death and heroism and child abuse, not to mention simulations of vomiting and insects and temper tantrums—is a performance artist who routinely mixed private and public long before she met John. She's canny enough to know that her personal material has moved from Spalding Gray's neighborhood to Liz Taylor's, and imaginative enough to exploit the concept.

Like the album it feeds off, *Rising*, the tour represents a new chapter: a collaboration that gives a career boost to Sean Ono Lennon (who's more riveting on guitar than on keyboards, probably because he's had fewer lessons) and also connects Ono to an alternative audience that may well prefer her music to the Beatles'. A woman inspired by truly marginal audience experiences—she once evoked peeing in theater bathrooms—surely understands how trippy it will be for us to see her son, with his big, loose body and granny glasses, looking like dead but acting like a really nice kid.

An early peak in the hour-plus set was "I'm Dying," a series of experience-haunted shrieks ("Help me!"; behind Ono, Sean and his band Ima, a bunch of big,



Yoko Ono; left,  
Sean Ono Lennon.

healthy guys with impish grins, pounded on their instruments like it was a pillow fight. There were some Japanese dance steps for "Wouldn't it," and some strutting of torn Bible pages (which got less crowd reaction than taking off her outer shirt, though the Catholic church lodged a protest the next day). There was a chant about the afterlife and a singalong on the climactic "Rising." During the encore, the spotlight turned on Lennon, who opened his throat and, in a teeny high voice, produced that extended bubble you thought only Yoko did—trippy for sure.

But less trippy than it had been at the Knit. Leaving Irving Plaza, I ran into a friend raving "63? No way!" and "What a great single mom"—just like I had the first time. But for me, the personal material had lost some of its magic. I carped about jams and, oh no, Elephant's Memory—more focused, Ima might well have sounded more suitably strange. My friend replied with astonished pity: "But didn't you know? Never see performance art twice!"

CAROLA DIBBELL

STEREOLAB  
Lupo's  
Providence  
May 17, 1996

Stereolab. From left:  
Mary Hansen, Tim Gane,  
Laetitia Sadier,  
and Richard Harrison.

STEREOLAB LEADERS Tim Gane and Laetitia Sadier never met a buzz or hum they didn't like. The English guitarist/keyboardist and the French keyboardist/chanteuse have taken over every sustained tone from Les Baxter to the Velvet Underground to New Order, and Frankenstein them into sacred monsters. Which comes off as rock, not musique concrète, because Stereolab are so adamantly a band (which currently includes vocalist/guitarist Mary Hansen, keyboardist Morgane Lhote, bassist Richard Harrison, and drummer Andy Ramasy) and because they adore pop for its quirky sound constructions and sweet tunes.

Stereolab understand counter-stardom and its delights. With minimal, if affable, talk to the crowd from Sadier, and no stage act as such, the group's show suggested a get-together in their basement studio for a session of romping drones. Gane added head-thrashing to underscore the intense moments as Sadier delivered her reflection on social anomie, a disarming gamine in a white shirt, with perfect black-slash eyebrows.

The set, with typical perversity, concentrated more on *Refried Ecstasium*, a recent limited-edition anthology of uncollected tracks, than the superlative mainstream release, *Emperor Tomato Ketchup*. Yet Stereolab repeat and vary patterns so compulsively it was impossible to tell just how much material was a fresh extrusion for that night. There's nothing gauzy about the trance sensation the band strives for. It's more like a primeval campfire party, with flickering lights and hard rhythms battering down the conscious mind. If a melody graceful as a ball bouncing down stairs, like the one in "Ping Pong," proved worth keeping intact and savoring, "French Disko," a thunder roll, took a lot of extended jam abuse and easily survived. The group doesn't need the precision of knobs and the efficiency of circuits. Their punch depends on the flesh factor: the crisp snap of attention when Ramsay changes beats; the sharp attack of Sadier's synthesizer solo.

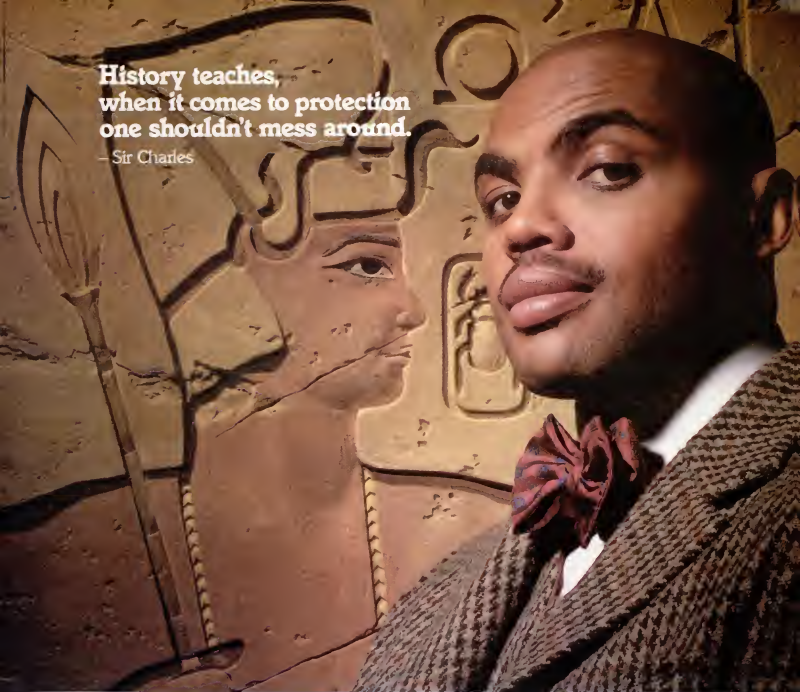
After a dozen puzzles and treats, the longish version of "John Cage Bubblegum" seemed merely sticky and puffed to the breaking point. And here the notable interchangeability of Stereolab's song parts, the limits in charm of their sliding layers of oil and water, began to hurt. Without stories and clear drama, Stereolab's numbers can become mere French Marxist catechisms accompanied by metronomes with Tourette's syndrome.

To erase that inconclusive conclusion, Stereolab's encore went for the verities and reworked one of their earliest singles, "Super-Electric," into a torrent of squalls and purrs with Gane, Sadier, and Lhote surfhitting the same sine wave. After the show, Gane signed posters for the hard-core faithful in their crushed-velvet jackets. He was no studio wizard or retro-lounge mystic, just an operator of the zaniest ride at the fair.

MILO MILES

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**SONY.**

# It's Alive!

Forget Lollapalooza. The heck with H.O.R.D.E. This summer, rock'n'roll's got a face full of makeup and a love gun loaded with classic teenage anthems. Kiss, God help us, are back. R.J. Smith gets inducted into the Army.

Photographs by  
John Seansbrick



*The world according to Kiss:  
from left, Peter Criss,  
Ace Frehley, Gene Simmons,  
and Paul Stanley.*

ADDITIONAL MAKEUP: GINA SANDLER AND ADA (ASSISTANT) / THE CRYSTAL AGENCY

# Whoo-hoo, it's a firehouse inside Gold's Gym, a Hollywood sweatbox packed with waiters looking to be actors, actors looking to be bodybuilders, and bodybuilders looking at their reflection in the mirrored walls.

In one corner, Paul Stanley, singer and rhythm guitarist in Kiss, and at 44 its youngest member, strains against the forces of nature as he hangs from the Gravitron. The man usually seen with a huge star across his face is, this Saturday afternoon, seeing stars. He may be masked for a living, but momentarily, dangling from the Gravitron, Stanley's face contorts into a mask of pain.

"All right, let's do it!" barks Anton, the official Kiss trainer. Stanley hunkers down in a device known as the Roman Chair and performs three good sets of lateral raises. As a reward, Anton hands him an amino-laced sports drink.

"The guy's an animal," says the drill sergeant in the Kiss Army. And the proof is in the pecs: Stanley is indeed a fine physical specimen, arriving here five days a week to sweat out the '80s.

"It's not my choice," he says through clenched teeth. "Too many people are expecting too much this summer."

Lock up your eight-tracks and dust off your daughters: Kiss are back. Jimmy Carter was president when drummer Peter Criss got the boot from Stanley, Gene Simmons, and Ace Frehley back in 1980. Two and a half years later, guitarist Frehley left to pursue a solo career. Something calling itself Kiss—Simmons, Stanley, and assorted ringers—has recorded and toured on ever since, though they took the makeup off the market in 1983. And somewhere right now, too, there's a dinner-theater production of *Man of La Mancha*.

But something unexpected happened earlier this year, as the modern lineup—Stanley, Simmons, Bruce Kulick, and Eric Singer—prepared for "surprise" cameos from Frehley and Criss in an MTV *Kiss Unplugged* special. The lawyers talked, then the musicians talked, and they discovered that after all these years they *liked* talking to each other. They looked nervous, possibly uncomfortable together again, on *Unplugged*, but an irresistible force had been set into motion.

The original foursome—classic makeup, classic costumes—have reunited for a two-year-long world tour. They sold out Detroit's—that is, *Rock City's*—38,000-seat Tiger Stadium in

47 minutes, front-row tickets scalping for \$7,000. A set of live tracks culled from the 1975 *Kiss Alive!* and 1977 *Kiss Alive II* era entitled *You Wanted the Best, You Got the Best!!* was released in June. The group that once clocked Doctor Doom are teaming up with the X-Men for a new Marvel comic. God knows there'll be new Kiss merchandise, new Kiss action figures, perhaps even another Garth Brooks Kiss cover. Everything but new Kiss songs: The set list is pure 1978 and earlier. The golden years. Before they can even think about recording a new album, they have to see if they can get through the summer together without anyone spitting up real blood.

"Right now we have no plans to do anything other than to take this one step at a time," says Stanley. "If we look too far in the future, we won't be enjoying the moment." Or as Van Halen once philosophized: "Only time will tell if we can stand the test of time."

Kiss's tour is the cowcatcher on the hard-rock railroad crossing the country this summer: Metallica headlining a Lollapalooza that also fea-

tures Soundgarden; the Scorpions doubling up with Alice Cooper; Def Leppard recording again; and Iron Maiden, Deep Purple, Warrant, and Slaughter all on the road.

But if the summer of '96 is a new iron age, it's not a new age of irony: Kiss have been apart for so long that they can't possibly occupy the same niche in the pop consciousness. What was once contemptible comes back collectible. The kind of people who'd call you a fag for liking Kiss in high school are going to be shouting it out the loudest for them this time around. Kiss split up as the biggest, richest joke band in the history of the universe, disparaged by hipsters and rock critics coast to coast as showbiz. But these days, everybody wants to be in showbiz: Darius Rucker and Trent Reznor sing Kiss's praises; Pearl Jam's Mike McCready totes a Kiss lunch box to school; Courtney Love was turned in by her mom for boosting a Kiss T-shirt when she was 12. Indie rock scenes from every industrialized nation on earth have issued Kiss tribute albums. They went out as cheese, and they come back as, well...fromage, anyway.

Kiss have the highest recognition factor of any brand name in America: for millions, thoughts of high school, of first sex or the first time you threw up in the backseat are trademarked Kiss, all rights reserved. Their stage-wide, megawatt-burning logos outgraphed your corneas; even when you shut your eyes, you saw their name in lights. Kiss brought salesmanship right out into the open of rock'n'roll. And that's what fascinates today's Kitsch Army. Kurt Cobain was a Kiss fan for all the right reasons—they rocked—and for the irresistible wrong ones—because they made it easy to pretend it's all a con.

And now, by some strange pact signed in blood and comic-book ink, Kiss return as elder statesmen. They've become gods to a generation that was young enough to prefer Lancelot Link and the Evolution Revolution the first time around. J Mascis got into Kiss when he was a college student at the University of Massachusetts in the mid-'80s, learning guitar while listening to Ace Frehley's solos. "But I can't duplicate the master. He's got this low vibrato that's hard to imitate." Should Kiss request him to open on the summer tour, Mascis is characteristically terse: "I'm ready," he says.

They've inspired others to imagine the lowest common denominator, like the moon and the stars, as something worth shooting for. "The Troma team is clearly part of the Kiss Army, no question about it," says Lloyd Kaufman, co-founder of Troma Pictures, the bottom-feeding studio that brought you such pop rocks as *The Toxic Avenger* and *The Class of Nuke 'Em High*. The studio formed in 1974, the same year Kiss debuted; if you could bang your head to a movie, it would be one of Troma's. Their latest, *Sgt. Kabukiman N.Y.P.D.*, tells the tale of a Bronx cop who inexplicably morphs into a martial arts warrior, one who bears a hardly accidental resemblance to Kiss's bassist. "We thought about calling the picture *Sgt. Gene Simmons N.Y.P.D.*," claims Kaufman. "Sometimes we need superheroes to battle the forces of evil."

The greatest show on earth







## "IT'S TIME TO CHANGE,"

Kiss looked grand booking grunge ornaments Stone Temple Pilots as their opening act, like they were sharing their heaviness with lions of a generation too freaked to enjoy the glory. Then, when singer Scott Weiland's addiction jeopardized everything, Kiss looked all the grander by comparison. Weiland can't deal with success? Lemme tell you about success, kid. The band has sold over 75 million albums worldwide, and its four releases shy of eclipsing the Beatles' record 29 gold albums. Kiss had an ice cream and a toothpaste named after them; love guns and westebaskets molded in their image. Just a few months ago, they made an appearance at the Grammys with Tupac Shakur, and Mister Tough Guy looked humbled. Hey, when asked to loan some costumes for an exhibit, Kiss told the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame to take a walk (well, the actual words were more like, "What do you mean it's a charity?").

With so much expected of them, Kiss can't just slip into costume and go through the motions. This time out they have to blow more shit up, be bigger, grander, louder, and stupider than ever. It will take some preparation. Months of a demanding physical and mental regimen are required.

"When we sat down together," says Stanley, "I said to the guys, 'We're training to fight Tyson.'" He sounds like Kevin Costner narrating a Civil War documentary. "And if we can't go in there and whip his ass we better stay home, because false bravado and any delusions we have about who we are will go right out the window the first time you step up there and meet the enemy."

Is he worried? His huge jaw sticks out a little further, like he's daring me to throw the first punch. "I predict a first-round knockout."

After his workout, Stanley heads across the street to the small rehearsal space where Kiss is putting its game face on. There are no costumes, no makeup; just musicians getting in sync after years of atrophy. They are scraping a decade end a half of muck off the songs, getting them into shape, too: metal squeezed



into a pop jacket, Rolling Stones blues riffs, Zeppelin screaming, and Detroit-feedback backbeat made gregarious, all individualistic excess driven out.

That's the goal, but in the studio they can't quite agree on how their monster hits went. The rehearsal should be posted on the Internet: That way every time Criss and Simmons disagree on a drum line, a netion of Kiss fans could e-mail the proper lick. The vibe is loose, friendly; is it boom-boom-boom-boom I wanna rock and roll all night, or...

But then a funny thing happens. They roar into "Duce," and as the band vamps the ending, Frehley, Stanley, and Simmons line up at the

## SAYS SIMMONS.

front of the "stage," old movements and fragments of choreography coming back to them with no apparent consciousness. Stanley brandishes a wicked moue, and then the three whip their guitar necks in tandem, first toward heaven, then to hell. The endorphins have kicked in. There is nobody in the room but a crew member and a journalist, but suddenly we are all in Budokon. Gym rats do not lie: Muscle memory is a reality.

Like a hairdresser who becomes a Hollywood producer, or a porn star who resurfaces as a respectable disco diva, the Sunset Marquis Hotel has seen other days. As surely as vices can turn into habits, so in Hollywood, where history is measured in minutes, can habit turn into institutions. Gene Simmons, 46 years old, sits by the hotel pool, casting a steady gaze across the water. It's a classy establishment these days, with white tablecloths on the tables and cellular phones on the tablecloths. But Simmons remembers staying here early on, when this celebrated hotel

was, well, a dump. Rock bands held up on the cheap, leaping off the second-story balcony into the swimming pool. For a moment, it's almost as if he wishes things could be like that again.

"It's time to change," says Simmons. "It's time for everybody to lighten up and enjoy life. There are no world wars. There is no Communist menace. There are still little evils around the world."

"There is still—" He looks vaguely distracted. "There are still very large breasts about to jump in the pool." Water splashes the petio, and Simmons refocuses. "There is still men's inhumanity to men and all that. But if you take a broader point of view about history, times are good. And even in the worst of times, I want Kiss to be able to go up there and lighten the load a little. For two, three hours, let Kiss take you away."

Even if he's not leaping off the balcony in six-inch-platform dragon's-head boots, these are the best of times for Simmons. He's putting aside the Hollywood turn his life took—managing Liza Minnelli, dating Cher and Diana Ross, starring in *Runaway* with Kirstie Alley. He plays them off as diversions now, junkets that distract you from your day job.

He's a rich man—"Trinkets? You go buy a fucking car, I want land"—about to get richer. Kiss reportedly stand to make between \$35 million and \$50 million on the world tour, and they'll owe a lot of it to reputedly the best businessman in the group. When Simmons was bargaining with agencies to promote the world tour, one report had him "eccidentally" leaving his date book behind in an agency's office, opened to pages itemizing (golly, could they possibly have been inflated?) bids from other agencies.

Gene is Kiss, says Peter Criss. He's the prime conceptualist, the first face fans think of. If Kiss has inspired more rumors than any other band in history, more of them are about him. Was he

Glitter and gold: Simmons and Frehley prep for a photo shoot in 1996



"IT'S TIME FOR EVERYBODY TO LIGHTEN UP AND ENJOY LIFE."



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Eric Singer, far left, and Bruce Kulick, far right, flank Criss, Simmons, Frehley, and Stanley after 1996's MTV Unplugged; below, Kiss Halloween costumes.

replaced by a clone when his movie career began? (Actually, the clone wrote the songs to *The Elder*) Is that really a cow's tongue sewn on? (It's all Simmons, and he does exercise this muscle.) Does he spit real goat's blood? (The official story is it's an evil mix of melted butter, food coloring, ketchup, eggs, and yogurt.) Did he and Ace really make out onstage? (This rumor probably started with one of Frehley's tumblers off his platforms, perhaps into Simmons' waiting arms.) And what's the deal with that hair? (Indeed.) He enjoys it when people pay attention.

So as he sits in the courtyard at the Sunset Marquis, with a certain expectation, shading into impatience. He wants to get things going, he says, and show other bands how it should be done. Gene's world has little time for mores.

"I spoke to Kurt before he died," he says. "I was trying to get him to do a Kiss cover for the *Kiss My Ass* tribute record." Simmons goes into an imitation of Cobain's joyless voice: "Gene, it's a real thrill to talk to you."

"I was gonna go, uh, you don't sound like it. You don't sound like a man who's white, and ergo has certain advantages that—let's call it what it is. If you're black or Hispanic or another minority you could complain, 'I don't get treated well....'"

"But a blond white boy. The center. You are the popular culture. You're in a famous rock'n'roll band, you have no right to be upset—about anything. You were molested as a child, you were raped by a bear, I don't give a shit. You're now the Idiot of millions. The American Dream really does exist, it really paid off: You can call Uncle Sam bullshit, call the President a moron, and they still give you money and women still want to have your babies."

About this time the waitress arrives, having picked up a signal from Simmons.

Waitress: "Did you want something?"

Simmons: "I didn't. You're easy on the eye. You're good to look at."

She blushes and throws him a puzzling smile.

"Thank God I am in a band," he continues. "Because I am the ugliest guy on the face of the planet, but my goodness, do I get a lot of puss." He's saying this after the waitress has left.

"There are some fringe benefits to being in a band. You get paid awfully well. Your ego gets

satisfied all the time. You get good seats at restaurants. You can buy whatever you want.

"But mostly, the ugliest sons of bitches in the world, who happen to be in bands, get laid all the time. And you don't have to be a hound."

On cue, the waitress arrives again.

Simmons: "When does the floor show start?"

Waitress: "What?"

Simmons is richly self-possessed and extremely intelligent, throwing off informed asides on the Children's Crusade or German

silent-movie actors two at a time. He'll eventually get back to answering my question of 20 minutes ago; right now he's picking up on something he just said.

"I've never been high in my life, except in a dentist's chair. Never been drunk. My room was a deal room in college! My roommate was a dealer, and I didn't have a clue what was going on. I was too busy hunting puss. I get that."

When called a confirmed bachelor, Simmons demurs. Try "free spirit": he gets that. He lives with the woman he's had two children with. He's just not ready for marriage.

"I have two kids, they're the most important thing to me. I really care about their mom, we'll be together in some way for the rest of our lives. That's a lifetime commitment. But I refuse to be a cartoon."

You and Duckman, both. Still, one has to admire Simmons's candor on most subjects. Ha truly does not care what anybody else thinks, so why not say what he's really thinking?

Anybody who gets married without a prenuptial agreement, Simmons counsels, should have their head examined. "Marriage unfortunately starts with the romance and fantasy of I love you, it'll go on forever." If it falls apart, it becomes a business. I refuse to be in that business. I'm in the Kiss business."

He may be the president of Kiss, Inc., but he's also a member—Simmons has never stopped feeling like a kid in a scrappy rock'n'roll band pitting itself against the world. His secret weapon is that he has never fit in.

Maybe that's why Kiss's music sounds so rootless. Give Kiss credit for a heroic degree of A) concentration, or B) obliviousness. It was



1972 when Stanley's and Simmons's first band, Wicked Lester, fell apart, and the two rummaged around for a new direction.

Their new band rehearsed on 23rd Street in Manhattan. The Chelsea Hotel was practically next door; Max's Kansas City, second home to Andy Warhol and his coterie, was within walking distance. The Mercer Arts Center scene—the New York Dolls, Suicide, etc.—was coming to life, a whole new language of sleaze and style. Kiss were casting for a sound but absolutely nothing that was going on around them penetrated the membrane.

While the Velvet Underground mocked the hippie's no-cost utopianism, and the Dolls speared their high-mindedness with every frou-frou and garbage-can beat, Kiss never even noticed; they acted as if neither hipsters nor hippies even existed. Their music wasn't a "reaction" to a counterculture that was coming to an end. It was an end unto itself. What do you think about the environment, an interviewer once asked Paul Stanley. "Fuck the environment, man. We are the environment" was the answer.

Besides, who needed Andy Warhol when you had Neil Bogart? Born a Brooklyn kid surnamed Bogatz, he was a Catskills singer, then a record promoter, then divine architect of bubblegum music, and ended up mapping out disco. He and Kiss had to find each other. It was Bogart who hired Amaze-O the magician to teach Simmons how to breathe fire, his idea to release four solo albums simultaneously in 1978. Bogart sponsored a Kissing contest early on, and when the band appeared at an Illinois shopping mall to award the winning couple, he threw dollars from above so that the crowd would form around the band. The winners appeared with Kiss on the daytime *Mike Douglas Show*. Sitting next to comic Toffe Fields, Simmons went into his I-am-devil-spawn shtick. Finally, Fields had seen enough. You can't fool me, she said. "You're probably some nice Jewish kid from Long Island."

Fields wasn't that far off. Simmons's mother was a Holocaust survivor who raised her only child in Haifa, Israel. When 9-year-old Gene got off the plane in New York in 1958, he saw a billboard with a picture of Santa Claus puffing on a cigarette. Gana thought to himself: Why is that rabbi smoking? An outsider from halfway around the world, Simmons had barely seen television, wasn't used to paved roads or refrigerators. Unable to speak English, he was taunted by his classmates.

It was one summer day, when the Israeli kid named Gene Klein wandered out to play with the big boys, that Kiss was truly born.

"Ha-low" was about all he could say in English, as he approached a circle of neighborhood kids playing marbles. "Ha-low," he said.

"What are you, stupid?" the kids laughed, mocking the way he talked. The circle of boys enjoyed themselves, but Klein stuck around. And when they finally let him play—the Queens way, shooting from your knees with one hand, not the standing up two-handed shot he'd learned in Israel—they quickly stopped laughing. He walked away after taking every kid's marbles, so many of them in his pockets that he was

**A JEW," SAYS SIMMONS, "I WANT THEM TO WORSHIP ME, TOO."**



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*after*



# the gold rush

Is there life after "Loser?"  
Eric Weisbard explores  
the artistic ups and  
commercial downs of  
the boy wonder known  
as **Beck**. Photographs by Chris Buck.

Here's Beck explaining Gabor Szabo, the eccentric whose records feature Bernard "Pretty" Purdie, a drummer sampled on his new album *Odelay*: "He's a freaky jazz-guitar guy from the '60s. Kind of corny psychedelic. Like there's one album called *Jazz Raga*. Basically, he cut a record, then the next day he was in a shop and he bought a sitar. So he got all excited and just went and played sitar over everything. And he didn't know how to play the sitar. The song starts out, doo-doo-doo-diddle kind of jazzy guitar stuff, but then all of a sudden the sitar goes wah wah! It just sounds so fucked-up and good."

Now here's Mike Simpson, who along with fellow Dust Brother John King produced *Odelay*, explaining Beck.



# NEIL YOUNG with CRAZY HORSE



Broken Arrow



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"You toss an idea his way, and instead of immediately rejecting it, he'll turn it into something fantastic. He looked in the *Recycler* one day, saw a guy in Santa Monica was selling Indian instruments. Two hours later he came back with a sitar and tamboura. He said, 'The guy tuned it up for me and taught me how. Let's record something!'"

It's almost too easy for him. At this point in Beck's life, the world wags its tail end assembles twisted little Day-Glo hallucinations on his behalf. Our first meet is at Sansul, in Los Feliz, Los Angeles, Beck's neighborhood. Beck, ever the improviser, turned a blown lunch rendezvous into an opportunity to pick up his 1969 Chevy from the shop, then suggested Sansul after the original, not at all Beck-ish, lunch spot proved to be on 3 P.M. slesta. Whereas Sansul, a Japanese restaurant where the owner makes available a free 16-page photocopy encapsulating his philosophy of health, is practically a fold in the man's overflowing garment.

Beck points out a section about a Sansul employee whose poor diet has rendered his shit exceptionally rank. He laughs in short barks that are gone by the time you notice he's even laughed at all. His famously agape eyes do have a way of lingering, but he's not too spooky about it. He is calm, though—"oh yeah," he'll say, when someone is pushing a professional obligation at him and he needs to escape; "oh yeah," he'll say when something has him excited, and there's a very clear difference so long as you've slowed down to his tempo (it's a little like reading Gertrude Stein). The first time I saw him he was wearing a brown UPS shirt, green pants, and sorely scuffed black work shoes. The second time I saw him he was wearing a long-sleeve shirt with patterns, the same black shoes, and I don't remember what pants. I do remember what he was doing, though—jumping on a trampoline in a photographer's studio, to accommodate the photographer's request. Beck tries to accommodate everyone. But jumping just didn't work. Beck's hair flew up a little, and then he wasn't Beck. Everyone could see it.

*Odyssey* is everything in the universe without ever being anything other than Beck. More ambitious than his only other real album, *Mellow Gold* (the profusion of other 1994 releases he explains as old projects indie finally put on the market), it glides on near-consistent hip-hop beats and stutters through a cartoon segment's worth of styles, samples, and cutup cameos. Each track is its own installation piece. As Beck puts it, "I wanted to make songs somebody could enter. A scenario exists and you kind of go in and create your own story within it." Less pointed and goofy than on *Mellow Gold*, the lyrics here are like mood brush strokes: "Let the dead beats pound all around"; "The wind that is blowing is blowing like a smoke machine." A Beatles beat gets an acid-jazz update; gameian chimes reinforce a fagged-out goodbye. In slow moments during the long recording process, says Simpson, the Dust Brothers would sometimes reach into their record collection and throw Beck a curveball. Mike Millius, the early-'70s folkie with the miserable voice? Cool: Beck took a deep drag, rewrote, and "Lord Only Knows" was born in Millius's image.

You wonder who this 26-year-old is, to absorb so much and spit it out with his signature attached. And it's a puzzle. He can be an insanely boyish, the idiot savant—sitting in a Silver Lake dog park, he seems all too preoccupied by the bug crawling up his arm: "Weird. It's like a white snowflake fly." As that last phrase suggests, his ability to turn a phrase is ace, lending substance to the claim that many of his lyrics are dashed off on the spot. About a backstage Passover that Beck, drummer Joey Waronker, and their "rock'n'roll rebbi" tour manager once held: "We threw the

most effortless personality, informed music enthusiast, emerges as he breaks down some loves for me.

To Beck, early hip-hop is folk music in the tradition he's followed since he was a 14-year-old hanging out with 78-rpm collectors; it also reminds him of listening to black gospel radio, "not really for the religious content, just the way the preacher would sermonize the rhythm. And the building up of the preaching. I hear that in Chuck D or Ice Cube." After singing me a verse or two of "Down Low," he swears he

AS "LOSER" BECAME A SMASH, A BECK LASH IGNITED THAT WOULD ULTIMATELY STALL SALES OF *MELLOW GOLD* AT JUST UNDER A MILLION. BECK DOESN'T DENY HE WAS HURT: "HOW CAN YOU NOT BE?"

shank bone in the mosh pit." On shuttling as a child between life with a scene-hopping mom in Los Angeles and grandparents in Kansas: "I'd sample." Summing up his summer with Lollapalooza '95: "This extended barbecue." As for genius vibes, I did detect a pint-sized echo of Neil Young: same sideburns and baseball caps, classic American cars, same stoner cadence and delight at confounding a listener's musical expectations.

Much as with Young, stories mythically cohere around Beck, and I prefer to believe them all. He told me that before moving to his current place, he lived in Echo Park for a year and never got a good night's sleep; the week he moved out he learned that his house looked onto the spot where the Hillside Strangler dumped his victims. He claimed that while mixing *Odelay*, his studio was right in between two others, one holding Black Sabbath, the other the Muppets ("I was sort of in the middle of the sandwich"), and that he and the Dust Brothers tapped into both studios, then smuggled the results onto the album: "It's on a subliminal level." And he reported asking Hype Williams, the video director best known for R. Kelly's "Down Low" and LL Cool J's "Hey Lover," to do a story treatment for *Odelay*'s first single, the "two turntables and a microphone" juke-joint fantasy "Where It's At."

"It's sort of along the lines of what he does," says Beck. "All of the sexy people in a party kind of atmosphere. But this would be happening in an Amish village. The Amish people would be participating in the party-people scene. And somehow the Fritz the Cat cartoon would be involved."

In fact, Hype Williams was asked to do the treatment, though not hired, and Beck's love for R. Kelly is as sincere as his affection for those punk "terrorists" (Beck's highest compliment) the Frogs, who are sampled on *Odelay*. Late one night up in my hotel room overlooking the Sunset Strip and the local House of Blues—"I'm going to have to take a broom to that place," Beck keeps muttering—the performer's

recorded a slow jam for *Odelay* that's in the can somewhere.

"It's fascinating to me, these guys singing R&B very sweet, smooth groove, but they're singing about how they want to get some girl's panties off and do them real good. Very explicit, but very sensitive at the same time. It's a really weird juxtaposition."

I'm not proud to admit it, but at this point in the interview I raise the authenticity question: Does Beck ever feel a little goofy, fronting like a rapper? There isn't even an embarrassed pause—Beck stops to choke on a peppercorn, but hey, he's fragile. "I don't think it really comes off that way, does it?" I acknowledge that the whole thing is a bit like Woody Allen trying to pass for Humphrey Bogart. Beck is in a long tradition of Jews—the original Hollywood studio owners, Al Jolson singing "Mammy" in blackface, Isaac Asimov's civilized science fiction, Allen Ginsberg's Beat melange, Woody's pop-culture comedies, Bob Dylan's folk-rock Americana—who invented nurturing fantasy universes as a way of escaping the alienation of being a stranger in a strange land. The closest comparison is the Beastie Boys, of course, but their love of rocking out and namechecking their coolness is pretty different from Beck, who lets rivers run through him. There. We let the matter drop.

Anyway, it's the labels that have been imposed on Beck—slacker spokesman, one-hit wonder, "Mr. Wacky," as the men himself sums it up—that have proved a problem, not any he's claimed for himself. As "Loser" became a top 10 smash, followed by *Mellow Gold*, a Becklash ignited that would ultimately stall sales of the album at just under a million. Beck doesn't deny he was hurt: "How can you not be?" His love of language unfortunately means he still remembers the really good gibes. "We were playing a show, and in the newspaper it said: 'There are only two words for Beck: Tommy Tutone.'" Recalling a Lollapalooza tour where he played early in the day, in crushing heat, before indifferent crowds, he says politely that "it was a neutral experience." The *Odelay* phrase "Rock the

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Catskills" speaks succinctly to how he felt trying to wow mainstream fans.

From late 1994 and all through the following year, Beck dealt with a series of deaths, beginning with that of Jac Zinder, the L.A. club promoter and music critic who'd been the first to write about him. A friend's mom was hit by a car. Other friends died of AIDS. "My old pedal steel player Leo, we opened for Johnny Cash and it was his last show. He died about two weeks later." Beck hadn't realized Leo was battling cancer. "I called him up to do the show and he said, 'I can't play pedal steel, I'm

amphitheater of toilet paper—and people walking around with toy guns. It was all choreographed, but there was a certain element of chance, and the two who were getting married were tied up and they had to saw a chair in half. I remember being so overwhelmed with this spirit of I don't know what. Some other force overtaking me."

It's typical of Beck's mellow gold fiber that his sadness finally gave *Odelay* the glow it needed. "I think more than anything it made me want to make music that was more celebratory." Several of the earlier songs Beck and the Dust Brothers had painstakingly labored over—like "Hotwax" and "High 5 (Rock the Catskills)"—had the potential to be raw noise bellows. Beck still speaks fondly of a "freak-out" called "Inferno"—"just eight minutes of chaos. It's sort of a testament to taking it all the way." (Other odd tracks, like a collaboration with the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion called "Diskobox" and an exotic remix of "Where It's At" by the Mo'Wax electronica artist U.N.K.L.E., will leak out in the months ahead.) But the concept of responding to adversity with a tortured statement struck Beck as clichéd. He went back into the studio after Lollapalooza and quickly reeled off several bouncy melodies like "Devil's Haircut" and "Sissyneck" that completed the album.

How the world will respond at this point is anybody's guess. Modern-rock radio has grown more conservative in the two years since "Loser." Where Roland West, music director for longtime San Francisco alterna-bastion Live 105,

says his station played Beck songs other than the hit and eagerly awaits new material, Bill Gamble, program director of Chicago's more formatted Q101, isn't shy to admit he expects his listeners find Beck "weird." (Beck wouldn't find this an insult, but that's not the point.) Better to run with Metallica.

Beck's not visibly shaking with worry. He notes that this year's cycle of events seems to involve weddings and births, not deaths; whether his own relationship with his live-in girlfriend will join the former list remains to be seen. After putting a new band together, he's planning what will practically

**BECK EVEN FINDS A GOOD WORD FOR THE SCRUNGE COMPETITION: "IN 20 YEARS WE'RE GOING TO BE DIGGING THAT. FIFTH GENERATION, THAT'LL BE THE STYLE."**

getting this operation and I can't really play it, but I can play lap steel." So he played that."

Last fall saw the passing of Beck's grandfather Al Hansen, a performance artist who was part of the 1960s school of pop-art experimentalism known as Fluxus. Beck remembers his grandfather as an early inspiration. "He'd ask if he could have one of my toys and then he would dismantle it and set it on fire and cover it with cigarette butts and spray paint it silver or something. Just taking these mundane things and turning them into some other monstrosity." At the memorial service, Beck performed several songs—the "fare thee well" end-of-the-night numbers, like "Lord Only Knows" and "Ramshackle," that give *Odelay* its heart—and watched a performance given in his grandfather's honor.

"It involved a gay wedding, a projection of 16-millimeter film, the throwing of toilet paper around—it created a sort of toilet-paper tent, a mini-

be his first significant American tour as a headliner. If the crowd at a pre-Lolla one-off he did in Fresno last summer is any indication—"a couple of teenybopper kids, some skate guys, some total stoner dreadlock guys, some Korean business-looking men, some redneck trucker-looking people, some young alternative kids, a couple of hip-hop kids with baggy pants"—he'll probably start liking his audience again.

He even finds a good word for the scrunge competition that threatens to keep him off the airwaves. "In 20 years we're going to be digging that. Fifth generation style, that'll be the style. I'm really into collecting vinyl. The wannabe Dylans that probably never sold more than 200 copies. Or Stones rip-offs. At this point they are almost more interesting than the original. That might be the case in 20 years. 'Did you hear the group from 1997 who were ripping off Silverchair?' " He barks out a laugh and his eyes never waver. It's almost too easy for him. ●



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# DEAD ROCK WEST

The **Hard Rock Cafe** brings its squeaky-clean rock-mausoleum concept to Las Vegas, where Elizabeth Gilbert finds American consumers of every generation convinced they are all young, all hip, all rockers.

Photographs by Geoffroy de Boismenu.

One fine afternoon, I am sunbathing by the swimming pool of the swank new Hard Rock Hotel and Casino. I am enjoying a cocktail when a Hootie & the Blowfish tune comes on through the outdoor speakers: "Only Wanna Be With You."

The song is not a favorite and I dive into the pool to avoid listening. But the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino pool is equipped with underwater speakers, so I hear the same Hootie tune, aquatically amplified, whenever my head goes under. I climb out of the pool and dry off to the strains of Hootie. I walk into the hotel,

through the Hard Rock Athletic Club, where guests are exercising to the Hootie beat. Past the Hard Rock merchandise store, where shoppers are shopping to Hootie. Through the glittery casino itself, where Hootie pumps out loudly over the clanging slot machines. Into the elevator, for a smooth Hootie ride. Safe in my room, I pick up the phone to call room service. They put me on hold, where I find Hootie coming through the receiver. Hootie wafting in on a breeze through





my open window. Hootie slipping faintly under my door, like a snell.

Hootie, everywhere. Everywhere, Hootie.

The Hard Rock Hotel and Casino can be found on Paradise Road in Las Vegas. By most standards, it's not small (17 acres, 340 rooms, and a \$100 million price tag), but it's pretty dinky for this town. The Excalibur Casino-Hotel boasts 4,032 rooms. The MGM Grand has 5,000. To the real big-shot Vegas hoteliers, a 340-room place is basically a Motel 6. What's more, the Hard Rock Casino contains a mere 800 slot machines. A corporate gambling giant like Harrah's picks casinos bigger than this out of its stool every morning.

So this is a small story for Las Vegas. But it's a big story for the Hard Rock Cafe. The new casino complex stands as the first serious aberration in a 24-year pattern of marketing megalomaniac success. Like all good franchises, the Hard Rock owes its stability to a consistent formula. Until now, it hasn't budged from that formula. Wherever they are in the world, Hard Rock Cafes deliver music memorabilia on the walls, classic rock in the air, expensive hamburgers on the plate, and piles of T-shirts in the company store. In return, the customers (about 60 percent of whom are tourists) provide Hard Rock America with approximately \$115 million a year.

Peter Morton, founder of the empire and father of this new casino venture, has said, "I created the Hard Rock Cafes because I wanted people to have a place to go where they could experience the fun of rock'n'roll."

This is an important statement, although to some of us it might seem a little odd. Is rock'n'roll inherently fun? For that matter, is gambling? The real connection between rock and gambling is not "fun" but their juicy, shared histories of corruption and recklessness. These are two dark American traditions—sexy, dirty, painful, shot through with vice.

So how does a corporation combine these two beautifully tainted cultures to create a friendly setting, sanitized and harmless enough for any suburban consumer?

First step: Eliminate any irony.

**HERE WE ARE NOW ENTERTAIN US  
ALL SIXTYISH GRANNY TELLS ME "ALL THIS MEMORABILIA IS FOR MY GENERATION. THE ROCK'N'ROLL GENERATION."**

I am momentarily paralyzed by what I see when checking in at the Hard Rock. Right above the front desk, big, cheerful brass letters spell out, HERE WE ARE NOW, ENTERTAIN US.

Underneath, smaller letters note, almost parenthetically, KURT COBAIN. "Enjoy your stay!" chirps the desk clerk. "Have fun!"

The room keys at the Hard Rock Hotel come in a tiny folder that is marked ALL ACCESS, in the manner of a VIP backstage pass. The poker chips in the casino are stamped with images of the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Jimi Hendrix, Tom Petty, and Bob Seger. The lights in the hallways of the Hard Rock Casino are shaded by Zildjian drum cymbals. The elevators are lined in black studded faux-leather, so you sort of feel like you're riding up and down in Tommy Lee's pants. The T-shirts in the merchandise store are displayed on roadie cases. The do-not-disturb signs in the hotel room read "I HEAR YA KNOCKIN' BUT YA CAN'T COME IN. One can even order a cocktail called "Da Doo Ron Ron Run Run Runner." At the end of their stay, guests are asked to report whether the hotel was "bogus" or "awesome." The casino carpets are decorated with musical notes and the room drapes have a pretty pattern of interwoven guitars.

In the interest of taste, not every rock-theme opportunity has been seized. The cocktail waitresses, for instance, are not referred to as "groupies" (although they are dressed like them). The pool is not shaped like Keith Richards's kidney. Nor is it shaped like a guitar. But 250 of the slot machines do have Fender guitar-neck pull handles, and others have names like "Better Be Good to Me" and "Take the Money and Run."





Lost in the supermarket: Among the Hard Rock Casino's dizzying assemblage of memorabilia and merchandise are a display case commemorating Kurt Cobain (opposite page, bottom left), and the Jimi Hendrix Purple Haze slot (above).

This brings us to a discussion of the really special slot machines.

There are two types of custom-designed slot machines at the Hard Rock Casino. One is the Purple Haze slot machine. The other is the Sex Pistols slot machine. The Sex Pistols slot machine, decorated with Union Jacks, pictures a snarling Sid Vicious above the line ANARCHY IN VEGAS! Below this is an explanation: THIS MACHINE ACCEPTS 1, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100 DOLLAR BILLS.

The Purple Haze slot machine pictures Jimi Hendrix on his knees in supplication, his head thrown back and his arms spread messianically. Spilling from his hands are the figures \$1, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, \$100. A note adds, ONE PURPLE HAZE SYMBOL DOUBLES WINNING COMBINATION.

I am examining these machines on a Friday morning when a bus tour arrives and unloads its passengers. The passengers, tourists who tell me they are from "the greater Denver area," seem mostly to be retired people in their 60s and 70s. They proceed to explore the casino in small clusters. Their uniform of choice is the jogging suit, and these jogging suits are impressive creations, vividly colored and decorated with metallic beads and regal gold stitching. The retirees move through the Hard Rock Casino like a resplendent flotilla of yachts, their jogging suits billowing in the air conditioning like sails.

A brittle, aging gentleman peels away from his group and sits down at the Purple Haze slot machine. He has a \$10 roll of quarters, which I watch him systematically lose. Bad luck for me. I was hoping he would win, so I could make a joke about Hendrix vomiting out the winnings.

"Do you like Jimi Hendrix?" I ask.

He says politely, "I'm very sorry, me'am, but I don't know who that is."

Then I tell him that I like his jogging suit, which I do. It is imprinted with maps.

"Thank you," he says. "These are flight maps of the American Middle West. And I'm proud to wear them."

"We are an oasis of cool in Las Vegas," Peter Morton tells me.

Morton's Hard Rock Casino publications continually promise a Vegas for a New Generation—a theme echoed in numerous newspaper articles, like one that ran recently in the *New York Times* headlined "Hard Rock Cafe Draws the Young to Las Vegas."

"We get a real young party crowd in here," a security guard confirms. And a boyish bellhop says, "Every day at the Hard Rock is like spring break."

Well, perhaps like a spring break reunion.

The staff is certainly young and hip, but, surprisingly often, the clientele is not. Particularly not during daylight hours. Having been promised a

brags to me, "Shake the hand of a man who's buying himself a brand new three-wheeler ATV."

I see many more families than I expected, as well as seniors, and the decidedly upper-middle-aged. Trying to make sense of this, I start asking people why they like the Hard Rock Casino. Whatever their age or background, they have the same answer.

A 21-year-old college student from Michigan tells me, "This casino is for our generation, you know? For people like me and you, who want something really cool."

A 38-year-old Minnesota landscaper says, "It's good for young people like us. You know, for our generation."

A 47-year-old Nashville sales clerk explains, "I like it because it's targeted at our generation. You know, the younger crowd."

A "60-year-old granny" says, "This place is great. All this memorabilia you see around here is for my generation. The younger set. The rock'n'roll generation."

At least the 76-year-old woman I meet in the merchandise shop doesn't claim that the Hard Rock Casino represents her generation, too. Instead, she says, she is shopping for her 11-year-old granddaughter, who "just loves this place."

"Why?" I ask.

"Well," the woman answers, "the Hard Rock is really created for her generation, after all."

Just check that out. A generation that includes a sixth-grader at one end and a 60-year-old at the other is a mighty 49-year generation. Most people wouldn't even call that a generation. Most people would go ahead and call that a half-century. You have to salute Hard Rock founder Peter Morton on this. He's got a half-century worth of American consumers convinced that he's representing them, and that they are all young, all hip, all rockers. That is marketing.

Let's take a moment to examine recent Las Vegas history. Vegas remains a dirty and permissive town, but it is not nearly so dirty and permissive as it once was. Once, there were no speed limits here, no sales tax, no closing time for bars. If you got in trouble with the Mafia, the cops would never hear about it. There were no waiting periods for marriages, no regulations on gambling, no pasties for strippers. This naughtiness went unchecked for several decades, until the federal government decided to get tough with organized crime in the late 1970s. Key people went to jail, most of the Mob left Las Vegas, and the sinfulness was considerably truncated.

Then came another devastating event: In 1976, gambling was legalized



Amid the hearty-partyers at the Hard Rock, longtime Vegas dealer Randy (above center) is a lone voice of discontent.

The Hard Rock Casino looks lazy, too, at first glance. The walls are covered with rock memorabilia, but the stuff isn't presented with any sense of order, context, or value. Every artist is given the same presentation: Neil Young next to Garth Brooks next to Metallica next to Elvis. The entrance to the casino is flanked by two huge panoramic display cases. On the left are Madonna collectibles. On the right are Buddy Holly collectibles.

There's no attempt at chronology. There's no sense of the artist. Rock-star clothing is starched, pressed, and hung on faceless mannequins. Even Courtney Love's dress looks clean. All the leather jackets and guitars start to look alike, until there's no difference between White Zombie, Bruce Springsteen, Billy Idol, and the Cranberries.

Everything appears completely random, but of course it isn't. There are no accidents here. The Hard Rock Casino, like the rest of the new Vegas, is the product of marketing science. If there is only one plastic knight-in-armor in each bathroom at the Excalibur, it is because market research has determined that consumers want only a hint of medieval ambience amid modern amenities, not the real deal complete with sputtering torches and urine-soaked straw on the floor.

Similarly, if the Hard Rock has grouped together rock artists and elements of rock history that seem to have no connection, it is because American consumers have done the same. Rock'n'roll is cool. Super-successful, million-selling rock'n'roll artists—of all eras, in all styles—are extremely cool. The concept doesn't have to be any more specific than that to work. The outlaw culture of rock long ago became a highly desirable commodity. Obviously, the Hard Rock corporation didn't create this situation. They did, however, recognize it, co-opt it, and market it expertly.

"We have succeeded," Peter Morton says, "by trying to give the people something we believe they want." Evidently he is right again: The Hard Rock Casino turns away about 300 people seeking rooms every weekend, and merchandise sales are ahead of projections by an amazing 75 percent.

The crowds at the Hard Rock Casino pass the archival displays without focusing on them, but I spend a lot of time staring at the collected memorabilia, seeking a reaction in myself. What is this stuff meant to evoke? Why was this particular item chosen? But the longer I look, the more I miss the point. Rock'n'roll is cool. Nothing more is being said here. Andy Warhol once described the Hard Rock Empire as "the Smithsonian of rock'n'roll." But with all due respect to Warhol, it's really just a wax museum.

The following is a selection of items emblazoned with the famous Hard Rock emblem that are currently available at the Hard Rock Casino merchandise store:

T-shirts, baby clothes, backpacks, bikinis, golf balls, golf-club covers, beer mugs, socks, picture frames, pillowcases, collector's-edition plates, dice, mugs, key chains, wallets, hats, leather jackets, denim jackets, wine, olive oil, and a mysterious amber fluid in a little tiny vial labeled HARD ROCK DESERT GOLD BATH GEL.

Depressingly, the consumers who seem to buy the most stuff are those who already seem completely merchandise-saturated. They're already covered with junk, having dressed themselves in advertisements for

in Atlantic City. Vegas was no longer the only game in town. These days, of course, there is competition everywhere. Now you can gamble legally in northern Connecticut, aboard Midwestern riverboats, and in Biloxi, Mississippi, among other seductive places. So why should anyone go all the way to Nevada anymore? Las Vegas needed a new allure.

In the last three years, theme casinos have come to the desert. The goal was to transform this sinful city into a family-oriented vacation spot. It has worked. Nobody could have imagined this happening a generation ago, when the fellas who ran Vegas all had the middle name "The." (One local taxi driver tells me, "Suddenly, the busiest times of the year out here are Christmas, Thanksgiving, and Easter. Can you believe that shit? People bring their kids to Vegas for Easter?")

In fact, Las Vegas has become a lot like Branson, Missouri, with slot machines: an expensive tourist destination where real experience has been replaced by processed "experience." One of the new theme casinos is Treasure Island, which boasts a live pirate-ship battle six times each evening in the lagoon out front. The Luxor is a huge copy of the Great Pyramid with the Sphinx nearby, and the parking attendants dress like Egyptian slaves. The MGM Grand is modeled after the Emerald City of Oz. My favorite, however, is the Excalibur—a huge, tacky castle, surrounded by a fake moat (which is spanned by a moving sidewalk, basically defeating the purpose of a moat). As you approach the Excalibur, a recorded voice in a half-angled English accent announces, "Hear ye, hear ye! This is King Arthur speaking! Prepare to transport yourself back to the days of King Arthur, where you can enjoy 100,000 square feet of gaming excitement!"

There is a general laziness to these theme casinos. For instance, there's no landscaping around them, because nobody cares. You have a trillion-dollar building set in the middle of a cracked, dirty, unevenly paved parking lot. Doesn't matter. Everyone's trying to get inside anyhow. Once you're inside the Excalibur, the medieval experience really amounts to nothing. They stick a fake knight-in-armor by a slot machine here and there, to help you feel "transported." Families in swimming suits walk around sipping ice-cream drinks out of fake gold chalice. It's like the owners are saying, "Here's your stinking castle, folks. Now start gambling."

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Amid all that product placement, it's a relief to see some true individuality in one chubby couple. They are wearing white undershirts, upon which they've written their own messages in laundry pen. I follow the couple through the store, but they buy nothing, only increasing my admiration.

His T-shirt says, THE FASTEST WAY TO A MAN'S HEART IS THROUGH HIS FLY.

Hers says, I'M TALKING, AND I CAN'T SHUT UP.

After nightfall at the Hard Rock Casino, the crowd changes. The population shifts to a younger, preppier group of individuals. The uniform goes from jogging suits to khakis. The girls wear pretty makeup and prom-night hair. The boys wear oxford shirts and baseball caps. Some of the freakier folks have goatees. It is a very, very white crowd. The blasting music is exactly what kids in my high school were listening to a decade ago: "Jack and Diane," "Night Moves," "Dear Mr. Fantasy."

One of the pit bosses told me earlier that a lot of the nighttime clients are "rich Californians," but everyone I talk to seems to be from the American Middle West. Chicago and its suburbs are particularly well-represented. I can't figure out where any of these kids got the cash to risk at the blackjack table, so I start asking them. In explanation, I am handed a lot of business cards.

In a few hours, I collect business cards from sales representatives, accountants, engineers, marketing managers, public-relations officers, bankers, and brokers. No doctors. One lawyer. A few young college students with fake IDs confess that they slipped past the security guards, but are too nervous to try to get a drink. Everyone is having fun. Just ask them.

I try to interview people, but they can explain little except that they are having fun. They tell me rock'n'roll is the greatest. They tell me gambling is the greatest. The Hard Rock Casino is really the greatest. When I ask what makes the place great, they tend to pump their fists in the air and shout, "Rock'n'roll, man!"

But the only people I see all weekend who actually look like rockers are the SPIN photographer, Geoffroy, and his assistant, Pierrot—two French guys in leather pants, with skinny hips and cigarettes. Pierrot looks particularly authentic, spending much of the weekend drinking and not sleeping and walking around the casino unshaven, with messy hair, saying, "This ain't rock'n'roll! This eez genocide!"

The Hard Rock party crowd gives Pierrot a lot of raised-eyebrow looks, like, "What's with that guy?" I slowly begin to realize they are afraid of him.

For example, I am talking to a frat boy on spring break from Seton Hall. I ask him why he likes the Hard Rock Casino. He gives me the arm-pump thing. He says, "This place is wild, man! Anything goes here! Totally fucking crazy!"

I point to Pierrot, and ask, "What do you think of that guy?"

The frat boy frowns. He says, "That guy's weird, man."

"This ain't Vegas," Randy is complaining. "This is Disneyland."

I meet Randy at the Hard Rock Casino on the same night I am trying to ask people what they like about the place. Randy is a lifelong resident of Las Vegas. His father has worked at the old New Frontier Inn Casino for 30 years, and Randy is himself a craps dealer at a major Strip hotel.

"I couldn't get a job at this place," Randy says, gesturing at the Hard Rock gaming tables. "Are you kidding me? It's too uptight, too corporate, too tight-ass. They do drug tests on all the employees, and check police records and IRS records. Also, I'm over 30, and they want younger, more innocent people dealing here. Pisses me off, too, because I taught the floor manager here how to deal craps."

Randy is strictly old-school Vegas. He grew up with gangsters' kids and dealers' kids and showgirls' kids. Like all the guys in the 'hood, he thought he would grow up to be a big player, too.

"In the old days," Randy says, "a gambler could walk into the Horseshoe Casino and lay a half-million down on a single throw of the dice and—win or lose—nobody would bat an eye. The Horseshoe would 'fade' any bet. Nowadays, you've got these corporations running Vegas, building these stupid theme-park casinos, cutting every corner, so tourists can come with their kids. Ask anybody who grew up here. Vegas sucks now. It was better when the Mob ran things. It was better when the boys had it."

Randy looks around him at the Hard Rock crowd with pronounced disdain. "And look at this place. A bunch of college kids from Kansas, laying down \$2 bets. All this fake rock'n'roll bullshit. There's no high rollers here. There's no glamour here. These are bozos who show up with a shirt and a \$20 bill, and they don't change either one all week."

The next night, Randy takes me and the SPIN photographers on a tour of old Vegas, or what's left of it. We drive around in his late-model Cadillac, blasting tunes, drinking beer, and listening to Randy's stories about the old days, when Vegas was still "mobb'd up." We drive past the Flamingo and the Tropicana, and the original glimmering Strip. We drive past all the small, old fleabag motels, like the Pollyanna, the Carnival, and the Normandie (with its sad neon sign reading HIGHLY RECOMMENDED BY OWNER). We end up at the Horseshoe Casino, where the dealers are shrewd old men and the gamblers are even shrewder and older.

Around midnight, I do the only thing a girl can do when trying to understand Las Vegas. I call Hunter S. Thompson, who fethered gonzo journalism back in the '70s with his book *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*.

"Hunter," I say, "I'm at the Horseshoe Casino in Vegas."

"I can't hear you very well," he says. Which is mutual. Thompson tends to swallow the last three words of every sentence, and the slot machines in the Horseshoe are loud.

*continued on page 113*



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# beat happening

Everything but the Girl goes jungle, overcoming near-fatal bouts with illness and irrelevance. By Ann Powers.

Everything but the Girl's Tracey Thorn hears her smooth, aching alto everywhere in London these days, in pubs, tea shops, and department stores from Islington to Piccadilly. "The Voice of Thorn," the singer intones, collapsing into an explosive giggle that's the most unruly element in a manner otherwise characterized by prudence, sarcasm, and clearheaded confidence. "Even I get a bit sick of the sound of it."

House magus Todd Terry's remix of "Missing," from EBTG's 1994 album *Amplified Heart*, became a left-field club-to-charts phenomenon that burned its way across Europe before reaching No. 2 in America in early 1996; the cut revitalized the 14-year-old career of Thorn and her companion in music and life, Ben Watt.

The new *Walking Wounded*, a gorgeous study in emotional unrest, further plunges Thorn and Watt into contemporary dance music, especially the speedball beats of the jungle variant drum'n'bass. Starting out with rhythm tracks—a few molded by club avant-gardists Spring Heel Jack and Howie B—EBTG created songs whose meanings often shift midway, that can be like dreams. Words turn back upon themselves, emotions upend the way a breakbeat can reverse directions in the middle.

"Drum'n'bass reminded me of things like bossa nova and bebop, which I've always loved," says Watt, who projects the intense, idea-addled air of a young philosopher as he sits with Thorn in Club Paradise, where they often come to hear "real blunted, tripped-out" grooves. "With drum'n'bass you speed up a bit from techno, and when you get that fast you can feel the half-time rhythm," Thorn adds. "Your head doesn't want to keep going dum-dum-dum-dum"—she demonstrates with a few short bangs—"so you start going dummm...dummm...dummm. Then you get that trippy vibe underneath, and that's where it suited us. I could sing quite slowly, really languid, and the rhythm track is doing all the fancy stuff."

*Walking Wounded* completes EBTG's transformation from marginal pop artisans to players in a sonic revolution. The duo's 1982 debut had established it as a small treasure of the new wave, specializing in a blend of hot and cool: easy,

acoustic-based songs detailing complications of the heart. By the early '90s, though, Watt and Thorn had backed themselves into a lite-jazz corner. "We were getting played on the radio alongside Kenny G!" Watt sneers. This artistic low was followed by personal disaster—Watt contracted the rare autoimmune disorder Churg-Strauss Syndrome and wound up in intensive care, where he endured the removal of 80

the "Missing" remix gave the pair a new audience.

"Missing" had great impact as a lyric in gay clubs," says Thorn. "It even has the word 'death' in it." "The video was made only months after I was ill," Watt remembers, "and it was the first time I'd taken my shirt off. I was amazed by my physique, almost in a perverse exhibitionist way. We had to edit big chunks of it. I do look really ravaged by illness."

Watt attributes EBTG's success to "a post-rock phase in pop music. The year we first surfaced was a post-punk rock phase. Now we're post-Seattle. Non-rock music is becoming part of the mainstream. We've never been a rock band. We draw our influences from jazz and R&B, and now a new strand is club culture. All these groups—Massive Attack, Tricky, Björk, L.T.J. Bukem—they're non-rock groups making interesting music in a kind of post-rock vacuum."

EBTG's record-release party later that night is like a free fall into that vast space. The two DJ booths at London's Complex contain a handful of the moment's most important sound stylists: the Massive boys, Nick Warren of Way Out West, Ultramarine, Spring Heel Jack's John Coxon, and Howie B, who's returned in a daze from recording sessions with U2. Watt spent an hour behind the decks earlier, mixing old influences Van Morrison and Tim Buckley over the latest beats. This is still a new tropic for him, and he can't resist playing on its beaches.

The crowd grows thick with women in rubber and Lycra, and men with that unavoidable English pseudo-skinhead cut. Thorn looks fashionably herself in a halter top and worn blue cords, and Watt's almost the only guy with longish locks; these two can appreciate a scene, but they keep their own counsel.

The sound system booms a new, spontaneous mix of *Walking Wounded*'s next single, "Wrong." Before anyone can tell him to relax, Watt's in the booth with Warren; the DJ pulls Thorn's vocal upward, into a moment surrounded by silence, then pushes a rhythm beneath her refrain like a gust of uncharitable air. Tracey herself dances nearby, laughing, as The Voice of Thorn takes the room and makes it its own. ■



Tracey Thorn and Ben Watt

percent of his intestines and the loss of 50 pounds.

EBTG's post-illness songs capture the quiet chaos that marks today's best dance-influenced pop. From the AIDS-haunted sounds of the gay house-music clubs to the post-colonial tragic-mulatto beats of Tricky, dance music is making room for those difficult emotions beyond disco's party and rock's adrenaline drive. A collaboration with Massive Attack led EBTG toward further dance-based experimentation, and



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# kickoutthejamz

Red-hot R&B impresario **Dallas Austin** dreams of one alternative nation under a groove. Interview by Charles Aaron.

After resuscitating Motown's wheezing legend with Boyz II Men's debut and kiddie-rappers Another Bad Creation, writer/producer Dallas Austin developed TLC, got friendly with L.A. Reid and Babyface, started his own label (Rowdy Records), and rehabbed Madonna's street cred on *Bedtime Stories*. But anyone who's heard Joi's visionary 1994 ebum *The Pendulum Vibe*, which Austin cowrote and produced, knows that the 25-year-old Alltanton had more on his mind than sipping Moët in his artists' videos. Currently working with ska-punks Fishbone, Austin, echoing his hero George Clinton, now wants to paint the white house of alternative rock black.

**SPIN: Prince is a big influence of yours. In many ways, he's the original alternative rocker. Dallas Austin:** Definitely. When Prince came out, he was writing every song, playing every instrument, didn't care what anybody thought of what he was saying—all this "Ah, motherfucker, she's a motherfucker." And it was popular. When I heard that, I knew what I wanted to be. From the ages of ten to 14, I was in bands playing Funkadelic and Prince with these older guys. Because of them, I also admired Run-D.M.C., the Smiths, Ministry. I thought everybody listened to different kinds of music. Later on, of course, people started saying to me, "You like that shit? That's white music."

**How did you end up doing R&B?**

I kind of lucked into it because that's what was happening in Atlanta. I was like, "Music is music, I can do this." I had my first hit record when I was 17 (Joyce "Fenderella" Irby's "Mr. D.J."). But commercial music gets so boring after a while. Now, I'm trying to avoid some of the rules and say, "Why can't I produce the Smashing Pumpkins? Why can't I work with Nine Inch Nails?" If I've got to make another Boyz II Men or TLC or the next R. Kelly just to survive in the R&B world, then forget it. So I'm approaching real talented black alternative acts and saying, "Hey, just like I started with R&B, I'm about to start this with alternative rock."

**So why do you think black rock bands have been so unsuccessful?**

I think we try too hard to combine rock and funk and everything else so that it hits and grooves, but you find yourself listening because the guitar player is doing all this Hendrix shit or the bass player is popping or the singer has this gospel voice, and not just for the songs. When you listen to Nirvana, or even the Foo Fighters,

and say, "Shit, man, those fools can't play, they only know three chords," and I'm like, "What's your point?" Maybe there's something in the way that they play those three little chords that we should pay attention to.

**Do you think black rock bands will get stuck with a "black alternative" tag the way certain hip-hopppers got tagged "alternative rap"?**

It's like we have no category. Just because a hip-hop artist is black, it can't be an "alternative" record, it's an "alternative rap" record and there ain't no "alternative rap" section in Tower Records.

**"Alternative" means "for white people."**

Unfortunately, yeah, and that shit suffocates us. If you call something "black alternative," then the black person says, "Damn, that must not be for me." Or a white person doesn't think it's for him because it says "black."

**What do you think of this summer's so-called "Black Lollapalooza" tour?**

I was the biggest Lollapalooza nut ever, because it wasn't mainstream. It was where everybody hung out who wanted to be away from all that. Now, it's so straight that this [Smokin' Grooves] tour with the Fugees and Cypress Hill looks like an alternative. For there to be a real Black Lollapalooza, you'd have to make a statement, you'd need a situation where some black act could come out and be as fucked-up and crazy as Marilyn Manson. It would have to be to the core.

**Any groups inspire you recently?**

Alice in Chains is my favorite act of life. Björk, Massive Attack, those records are the reason I get up in the morning and drive the highways.

**Do groups like that express emotions that you don't get out of mainstream R&B?**

Yeah, if it's Layne from Alice in Chains, his feelings are, like, "What would my body feel like smeared all over this wall." [Laughs] Every single person at some point has a fucked-up emotion and, as a songwriter, I'm at my strongest when I can tap into that fucked-up moment. If you can do that, you can be a songwriter for the rest of your life. ■



Genre jumper Dallas Austin.

you're responding to the melodies and emotions, not all this complicated musicianship. Kurt Cobain was as melodic as the fucking Beatles. I don't know too many black rock bands who would make a record as simple or straight-up as Bleach.

**What's your vision of a black rock band?**

If we can get a black kid up there in jeans and a T-shirt, in his everyday clothes, singing songs as catchy as somebody like Radiohead, then we can talk. But nobody has the nerve to do that. I know a lot of black musicians look at Green Day

# Life After Death

They've seen their friends slaughtered, their families shattered, their world ravaged. Yet the people of **Sarajevo** never lost their faith in peace, and in each other. **Bob Guccione, Jr.**, finds a city re-emerging from the darkness of an unspeakable war. Photographs by Loren Haynes.





A little-known fact about the war in the Balkans is that the Virgin Mary predicted it. In June, 1981, she appeared repeatedly to six children, now known as The Visionaries, in the hills of Medjugorje, in then

Yugoslavia. She told them that Jesus was angry with the human race for its lack of love toward one another, and that the children should pray for peace and spread awareness of the need for more prayer in the world. Hundreds of other people saw visions, too—it was as if she became a regular around the village—but she spoke only to the children. When one asked why she had chosen them to communicate with, she answered: "I do not always choose the best!" giving what may be the first ever Divine backhanded compliment. She also told the children, "This place will be hell on earth in a few years." Ten years to the day of the first vision, the war in the former Yugoslavia broke out.

Three of the Visionaries still receive daily visitations, at precisely 5:40 P.M., and one, Ivan, communes with her publicly. At the appointed time, he stands on a large gazebo-like platform behind the church built in the Virgin's honor, and stares into the sky, motionless and silent, for about ten minutes until he mutters "Ode [She's gone]." Then he tells the Franciscan priests what she said and they type it in various languages and stick it on the wall at the back of the church. One priest puts it on the Internet.

Although the Vatican hasn't designated Medjugorje an official Holy Place, God seems to have: Despite the fact the village is only 15 miles from the Bosnian border, and 20 miles from Mostar, where some of the fiercest fighting

took place, there wasn't a single casualty in Medjugorje during the war.

Photographer Loren Haynes and I stopped there on the way to Sarajevo. A quiet, serpentine street of souvenir shops and cafes faces the church like a patient gallery, harlequined in sun and shadow. The church sits alone on an immaculately clean plaza: tall, white facaded, it looks as if it's going to fall on you, an illusion of the slightly clouded sky floating overhead. Inside it is spotless and bright and the vivid stained-glass windows show the Virgin, beatific, appearing to the children.

It was mid-evening and dark by the time we left Medjugorje. We were traveling with two Englishmen, Bill and Andy, who comprised the entirety of the Bosnia Aid Committee of Oxford (although at the height of the war, Bill led a convoy of trucks delivering 20 tons of aid into Bosnia every two days) and Feryal Gharahi, an Iranian-born Muslim and U.S.-based lawyer who had adopted BACO. We were headed to Bill's house in Pazaric, a village in the mountains above Sarajevo, where we would stop for the night.

Loren and I sat in the back of the heatless van huddled under a blanket, frozen by a draft from the rear door which didn't shut properly. Earlier in the day through the rear window we saw the receding scenery of a war zone: a tank parked at a barren crossroad, soldiers in jeeps, rows of blown-up buildings, an old woman in black bent over in her garden, picking at the miserly earth like a huge crow. Now everything was black as we dipped and climbed and wound our way through the mountains. Occasionally, we'd see a car pass in the other direction, the red coats of its taillights shrinking



Graves in a park in Sarajevo.



in the dark. A huge convoy of military trucks and tanks groaned and rumbled past. At a checkpoint, Serb soldiers opened the back of the van and peered nervously in at us, but when we showed them our NATO press laminates, waved us away, bored.

When we got to the house, Bill's landlord, Haris, and his wife, Ide, lit the stove in the dining room and made us tea, and Haris brought out a large glass jar of distilled alcohol called *loza* to warm us up. Before the war he had been an electrician; during it he laid land mines. Now, post-war, he had to go pick them up again. Strangely, he was very cheery about this work. He told Bill and Andy the road to Sarajevo was open again, which meant we wouldn't have to take the precarious route over Mount Igman in the morning, but snipers were firing at vehicles as they passed through Ilidza. He announced this breezily.

His face was creased like the palm of a laborer, and he spoke with one hand in front of his mouth, as if he were trying to keep his face on. He smoked and talked incessantly. Intermittently, Andy translated a portion of what he was saying. At one point, Haris jumped up and, gesturing to Loren and me, showed us the shrapnel hole in the wall by the sink where his wife had been standing when a shell hit. It must have missed her head by two inches. She chuckled delightedly as he retold the story.

It snowed every day we were in Sarajevo. It would stop and start several times, giving us the impression of being in the city longer than the five days we were, by punctuating each one of them so distinctly. You'd walk through the soft falling snow, enter a place, come out an hour later and it would have stopped and the streets would glisten blackly and the sidewalks slosh grayly next to the perfect white carpets of the many small parks, whose trees had been cut down for firewood during the war. The few cars would *shooosh* through the thin layer of water, or splash through a puddle collected in a pothole created not by municipal neglect but shelling. The sun, in the leaden sky, oscillated between a much brighter and much darker gray, lighting and dimming the snowy streets and destroyed buildings



jeopardized eyes beneath the brow of deepening evening. A small café on the corner of an alley is well lit and inside a couple of people, not together, read next to white china coffee cups.

There are a few clothing stores, with thin, uncomplicated window displays: a brown sweater on a plastic torso, a few ties and belts on the shelf. A woman's clothing store boasts, dispassionately, a couple of unremarkable dresses and a blouse. The stores are closed most of the time. Purchases for household goods and food are made at little kiosks. There are no restaurants on the main street, they are tucked into the maze of side streets unfolding behind Marsala Tita, and they are coming back to life, like plants after a thaw. There are several cafés, bright and loud, invariably playing English and American pop music of the early '70s, for some unfathomable reason.

NATO soldiers, and their trucks and tanks, are positioned everywhere. They stand patiently by their vehicles, at intersections and outside major buildings, projecting a solid efficiency and understated power. Some have sprigs of flora in their helmets, presumably as part of their camouflage uniforms. But it looks ridiculous, like the plumeage of ceremonial guards, since there's almost no foliage left in Sarajevo to blend into. The soldiers are friendly and mostly bored.

We stayed at the Holiday Inn. The entrance has been closed for years—it was too exposed to sniper fire—so you come and go through a simple door at the back. None of the rooms have windows you can see out of; where there was glass is now this opaque, heavy plastic that the U.N. has covered most of Bosnia's serviceable orifices with. Many of the rooms don't have rooms: You push open the door and behind it is just a bare floor and a gaping hole in the far wall, sometimes covered, sometimes not, with the ubiquitous plastic. There are no rooms on the eighth floor; they've all been blown away. Bullet and shrapnel holes pockmark the walls and

doors. Curtains have bullet holes that look like cigarettes burns. The carpets are bloodstained.

The rooms ring the hollow center of the hotel, so that you can peer over the hallway railings and look into the cavernous lobby. The hallways are dimly lit by intermittent ceiling lights. Green exit signs glow in the receding dark at each bend of the corridor. The lobby is unheated and the two-story glass wall between it and the street is a patchwork of some remaining glass and the sheets of plastic shivering in the wind. The electricity went out regularly.

For its front office, the hotel administration resides glumly in a cage, with bulletproof glass from the counter to the ceiling. The hotel is actually a renegade. It broke away from the Holiday Inn chain when the war broke out and kept the name and, for press and military arriving on assignment from around the world, the fraud of legitimacy.

It is frozen at some mysterious point in time, like a watch stopped at the

**There are no rooms on the eighth floor of the hotel; they've all been blown away. Bullet and shrapnel holes pockmark the walls and doors. The carpets are bloodstained.**

whose charred facades were braided in thickened snow. You could see through their glassless windows into the hills behind, which ring Sarajevo like the terracing of a huge stadium. The other, still intact buildings were soot-drenched at their bases where they met the most broken pavement. Their walls were darkened by patches of missing plaster and torn-away brick, and flecked with bullet and shrapnel holes like the black spots of an untreatable skin disease.

A tram, boldly red, rumbled past our hotel and down the middle of Marsala Tita, the main street which runs through the city as a bent spine. The tram is free and full of people.

The snow falls in long, fat fleeces, further quieting the already quiet city. There are people walking over the thin, lumpy pillow of snow. There is no bustle anywhere, no rush hour, no rush. In hindsight it's obvious there's nothing to rush to, or particularly from. At the building the U.N. made its headquarters, the lighted offices a floor above the street gleam dully like

moment its face is broken. Pictures in the elevator show a glistening swimming pool, people eating in the patisserie, another elegant, sunny restaurant, and the casino, as if that was the way life was here just yesterday, or, more eerily, will resume tomorrow. Unconsciously apocalyptic, the digital clock on the wall of the front office is stuck at 9999.

**Alma Catal** is 16 years old and has been interviewed dozens of times. She is effin and cherubically radiant. Her hair pulled back accentuates her round face and, sucking on a straw buried deep in a glass of Coca-Cola, she is the only Sarajevo I met who looks younger than she is.

She tells us she's a dancer, saying it with the authority of someone declaring her profession. But there's very little employment in recuperating Sarajevo, and she doesn't actually mean she's paid to dance. Dance is what she does—in clubs, with her friends, indefatigably apparently, to hip-hop and techno. It's her identity. It may even be her vocation, but Sarajevo is still too fractured to nurture the fragile concept of vocation.

She loves techno, disdains "alternative," and abhors rock'n'roll, scrunching up her face as we name most new bands. She keeps asking me if I know the people in certain groups that I didn't even know were groups.

She was 13 when the war started, and lived on the 15th floor of an apartment building exposed to Serbian fire. Her bedroom faced the mountains held by the Serb Nationalists—"the Chetniks," as she and everyone else in Sarajevo refers to them. Mercifully, she and her family were out when the anti-tank bullets—the kind that penetrate the armor and explode inside and incinerate the crew—struck their apartment and burned it and everything in it to ash. In her excellent English, this little girl told us about how her parakeet had died in the fire, and how her father had explained (and I imagined him doing so tenderly as he stood in the smoldering ruins of their home) that the bird would've died from the smoke, not the flames, and therefore not in pain.

Yes, she had had friends who died. "My best friend, this boy, went to make a tape for me, to copy a tape I liked, and when he was in the shop, a grenade came and killed him and some others in the shop. He was there for many hours. Nobody could get him because of snipers. It was terrible. I loved him so much, he was my best friend, and he died trying to do me a favor."

Alma is well-known in Sarajevo, because of her dancing and the amount of times she's been on television, particularly in or in relation to Bill Carter's stunning documentary *Miss Sarajevo*. Carter spent over two years in Sarajevo and, in addition to making this documentary, arranged for the famous satellite hookups from the besieged city to U2's Zoooropa concerts.

Carter's film chronicles, with emotional rawness, daily life and death in Sarajevo during the war. In one scene, he has to run the gauntlet of sniper fire in order to cross a road and park, and the jerky footage is of the road and approaching building he's running toward, and the audio is his breathing and footsteps and the pops of rifle fire. The centerpiece of the movie, but not, despite its title, the point, is a local beauty pageant that crowns Miss Sarajevo 1993. The pageant was emblematic of the defiance of the Sarajevans to being cowed by the siege to stop living. Obviously, life couldn't and didn't go on as normal, but each trivial vestige of normalcy was a tiny triumph. At one point in the pageant, all the contestants, in swimsuits, unfurl a banner they stretch across the

stage which says, in English, "DON'T LET THEM KILL US. The women are smiling at the camera as they hold the banner."

"The pageant was so ironic it had to be in the movie, of course, but that's not all the movie's about," Bill told me. Miss Sarajevo is Alma, he said. "It's her irrepressible spirit that represents the hope of Sarajevo." She figures prominently in the film, as de facto narrator, a bright, animated fairy, surrounded by her friends rendered mute by the language barrier while she explains, in a blended tone of innocence and detachment, the inexpressible horror of her world.

Bill is broad-faced, with flashing, intense eyes that suddenly fix on you as if he has just seen something over your head or on the tip of your nose. He came to Sarajevo in March, 1993, 11 months after the fighting began, with an unclear purpose. The war galvanized his sense of purpose, and the documentary was born.

Not merely an observer, he helped in any way he could. He was distributing boxes of food at a children's center a few days after his arrival when he saw his first "instance," as he calls it: He had just handed a box to a six-year-old girl who was running back home across the open square with it, when a sniper blew her head off. Her headless body lay there for two days. No one could get to it because of the snipers.

"The whole time was a psychological fuck. They would shell for days and nights and then stop, for two days, and you'd think maybe it was over, and you'd start to come outside and people would walk around. Then there'd be one shell in a playground. Eleven kids dead—they knew kids couldn't be kept inside. That wasn't an accidental shell. That playground was targeted—someone said we're going to kill 11 kids today."

Ten thousand adults and 1,700 children were killed and more than 50,000 wounded in Sarajevo. Captain Claridge, an English officer in the IFOR (NATO's implementation Force) press office, told me this was the first war where civilians were the primary target. She told me about a man walking his three-year-old son in a stroller and a sniper shot the child in the head, rather than the father. Why? Because there was more horror, more residual terror in killing the child in front of his parent. She told me about a school of small children that operated every school day of the war, with thick drapes over the windows to thwart the snipers, until a rocket crashed through the window and killed everyone inside.

The siege itself was a protracted act of torture. The Serbs could have marched into the Bosnian capital, unimpeded, and occupied it in three days. But they chose not to; instead, for three and a half years, until NATO forced the end of the war, they tormented the Sarajevans like a bored cat toying with its captured mouse, trying to drive them collectively mad. Nor was the siege alright: the Bosnian army built a tunnel under the airport through which troops, weapons, and black-market goods were shipped regularly, and refugees from villages came in and city dwellers left. This, too was part of Bosnian Serb president Radovan Karadzic's tactic: He knew one of the surest ways to undermine a city is to flood it with refugees.

Still, I wondered why the Serbs hadn't ultimately just gone in and taken the city. When I asked one of the American NATO officers, he shocked me with his answer: They didn't want bad PR. How could that remotely be an issue, I argued, after all the atrocities the Serbs were known to have committed: the mass executions, the concentration and rape camps, and the complete obliteration of villages, all in the vile, unforgivable name of "ethnic cleansing"?

The American shrugged.



*During the war, Harris laid down mines; now, he cheerfully retrieves them.*



*Relief worker Bill, one half of the Bosnia Aid Committee of Oxford.*

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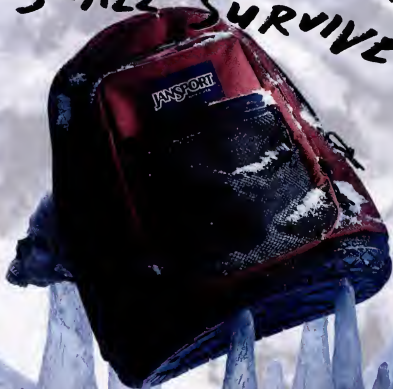
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"They figured people'd forget about that. The Olympics were in Sarajevo. They knew nobody would ever forget if they took Sarajevo."

At the outset of the war, the Serbs released their most psychotic criminals and mental patients, armed them, put them on the front line, and told them to have a good time. The rape camps were one by-product, as were the torture and slaughter of unarmed Muslims.

Bill Carter told me this story: The grandparents of a friend of his lived in the Serb-held suburb of Grbavica. Even though they were Muslim, their neighbors protected them, but they couldn't leave their apartment because the army would take it. So they never went out. Neighbors brought them food and water.

One day a Serb tank pulled right up to the front of the apartment building, and there was lots of shouting and banging in the apartment of a woman, a teacher, below. The grandparents felt sure the soldiers had come to kill them. They hugged, prayed, and waited for the end. The noise went on for an hour. Then it stopped and the soldiers got back in their tank and drove it away.

The old couple went downstairs, expecting there'd been a rape. They found the woman sitting calmly at her table, completely fine.

"She used to teach mentally retarded children," Bill concluded. "The tank soldiers were her former pupils, and they were all freaked out—they didn't know how to operate a tank or what they were doing—and came to see her so she could calm them down."

Vlado Kavajic is a musician, the guitarist and lead singer in a local band called Don Guido and the Missionaries. He is 33—the age Christ was when he died, as he keeps hearing. He is trim and healthy-looking, with a high forehead, long jet-black hair to his slight shoulders and a Van Dyke mustache and goatee. His voice is deep and steady and he has a quick sense of humor. When he smiles his face creases with the pleasure.

He didn't believe there'd be war, even though people kept asking him if he was prepared for it. When it came he went into the Bosnian Muslim army, even though he is Serbian. He fired a bazooka and estimates that he killed dozens of enemy soldiers. He played music right up until joining the army.

"I did see people get killed," he says. "Not exact moment of death, because if a big bomb falls at the moment of explosion you can't see much, but two seconds later you see the effect. I saw brains in the mud. I saw a man with a fountain of blood coming out of his neck, two meters away from me." Incredibly, that man lived: Vlado held his hand over the wound, and carried him back to the camp. "He got paralyzed, but he can walk now."

There were times when he was really scared. "I got terrified when I saw the death of my friends on the front line. It's not an easy feeling, seeing death up close. I understand one thing, it's part of life. It's always there. If you come to terms with death, then you're free to live."

He was wounded only once; a ricocheted bullet hit him in the hand while he was playing pool at his base. He showed me the bullet, which he carries in his pocket. It is almost whole, just one side is flattened.

He says that the spirit of the people in Sarajevo during the siege was very powerful. "To be exposed to war constantly, every day, every moment of your life, to live four years under such conditions, if you don't have a strong spirit, strong beliefs, a strong soul, you cannot survive, man. You either go crazy, or you die."

He believes that Sarajevo is stronger because of that four-year nightmare: "Although it has been changed, it has been destroyed very much, enormous amounts of pain and misery happened to people, I think that now there is a different type of people, much wiser. A certain, maybe smaller circle of people really got wiser and maybe more determined to live."

He thinks there is a good future for Sarajevans and, like so many of them, is forgiving of the aggressors, shrugging off holding a grudge, saying, "We who were attacked don't want any more war."

After lunch we went to the Trust Pub, a tiny bar with a pool table in front



Rock and a hard place: Vlado Kavajic and his band played music right up until joining the army.

and several tables lining a banquet in the back. The band plays on a cramped loft platform.

He is late for rehearsal but the other band members, Fico the King, the bassist, and Atilla the Hun, the drummer, are later, so we sit and drink coffee with Vlado and a few of his friends. I asked him how the war had changed his music. "I can really say it's my music now," he answered. "Maybe early it wasn't really mine. The songs just came to me now. I make songs in a split second, no problem. I guess I became more open and more honest to myself also, and to others."

"There's so much romance in life now, for me. Much more beauty than before. You meet very nice women, very charming, and that is good." He smiles. "It's sometimes like in the movies, only more realistic."

Trust, he said, in his voice that starts behind his chest, putting his hand on my shoulder, is very important. "And music—and love—are the most important things now. If you love, you don't hate. It's that simple."

Today was Bajram, the celebration of the end of the Muslim month of fasting, Ramadan. That night, the curfew was suspended and the bars and restaurants that normally turn you away at 10:00 because they must throw you out by 10:30 were able to stay open for as long as they wanted. The pub was packed till gone midnight, smoky, unbearably hot, pulsating with Vlado's bluesy rock and the crowd's dancing, as much as we could dance within the shoulder's width space each of us occupied. At one point I had to pee. Having been to the tiny toilet earlier, when its single, over-worked bowl was already much backed up, plumbing not yet one of the restored arts in Sarajevo, and guessing the situation couldn't have improved since my last visit, I made my way outside. I didn't realize how

**"I did see people get killed," says Vlado Kavajic. "Not exact moment of death, but two seconds later you see the effect. I saw brains in the mud."**





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airless the pub was until I felt the sting of fresh air in my lungs. I crossed the street to the threadbare park, glistening blue-white in the street lamps lining it, and melting into a fathomless dark whose uneven crown was the outline of distant mountains.

I found a tree cloaked in shadow and relieved myself, listening to the muted sound of it striking the snow and looking back at the pub, lit like a lantern in the middle of a black, formless row of dead buildings. People milled in front, or walked by, a procession of unhurried shadows. Someone, 50 feet away, hailed a taxi coming down the hill by the side of the park. The taxi pulled onto Marsala Tita and stopped, waiting patiently under the moon of a streetlamp, while its fares walked toward it.

I finished and came back down the slope, and waited at the curb as a couple of cars approached and passed, riding on the slush as if it were rails. The cold was biting and I was shivering now. In the club, I was sucked back into the heat and the stench of smoke and sweat.

After the pub closed, and its occupants spilled into the street, we went club-hopping. First we went to Cinema, Sarajevo's upscale club, although all it is a converted apartment that leads out to a large patio. It was literally too packed to move: You entered, went with the stream of people who had just entered before you, and were pushed from behind by the people entering after you. We did, as best I remember, a circuit of the two rooms and patio, and were carried back around to the front where, like silt, we were deposited against a wall, and stayed, happily, for about an hour.

We had swelled to a group of eight people, stuck to Viado by the centrifugal force. We went from Cinema to a jazz club, where we drank until it closed at 2:00.

A Scotsman named Jim had joined us. He suggested we go to a speakeasy he knew in the hills. Even drunk I thought to myself *hills will require a car*, but while I was still logging this gem of logic in my mental vaults, Jim was procuring a U.N. van, and we were clambering into it from all sides. I was in the back, squeezed up against the door which I was fairly sure had been closed with less definiteness than I would have liked. Jim was driving, which is to say he was in the seat normally reserved for conscious, if not always sober, people who operate the vehicle—his version of which was to exhort it. In growls, including some ancient incantations about someone's mother, perhaps his own, to climb the hill. Optionally, he tried steering, mostly to disappointing results. His discovery of the four-wheel-drive shift—there were, after all, two similar-looking sticks to choose from—was a great evolutionary step forward for our journey. As we skated sideways and backward actually more than forwards, I weakly inquired if this was in fact Jim's U.N. van or the U.N.'s U.N. van, simply asking because it did seem he was on less than totally familiar terms with it and it had been a suspicious coincidence that this was the first vehicle we came across, as I recall. No one answered. Everybody was very happy (except me). Wedged into the corner of this van that still hadn't abandoned its instinct to roll backward down the ice-glass hill, I considered the growing likelihood that I had come all the way to Sarajevo just to die in the back of a stolen U.N. van, another drunk-driving victim.

Suddenly we stopped. Of our own volition. We had found the speakeasy! We emptied out of the van, our feet landing on crunchily, moonlit snow, trying to balance, gather ourselves and walk the ten feet or so to

the front door, where, in a semicircle, grinning that half smile between looking foolish and attempting the look of all-knowing sophistication, we played the getting-in charade. We knock on their door at nearly three in the morning, and they pretend they don't know what we're talking about, as if otherwise it was perfectly fine to randomly call at their home in the middle of the night (when in fact, if you think about it, Sarajevo is exactly the last place in the world you want to go knocking on people's doors at three in the morning if they don't know you). Eventually, after a couple more exchanges in Serbo-Croat—presumably along the lines of "You sure you don't have a speakeasy in there?"—we were admitted. We walked

through a couple of rooms with people sitting on couches, talking quietly, into the kitchen where some very serious and equally drunk soldiers were sitting at a linoleum table, their rifles against the wall, and were taken into a neat living room, where we sat on couches and in armchairs, in the sort of orderly way you would if you were visiting your grandmother. We bought wine by the bottle, whiskeys by the glass, and two large bottles of mineral water. Jim made melodramatic toasts in his broad Scottish brogue that sounded like he was talking and drinking simultaneously, about friends who couldn't be with us, and each time he and Viado clinked glasses forcefully.

"De ye remember Dragan?" Jim asked Viado at one point.

"Yes."

"He jest p'd his speedin' ticket the other dee—th' one he got on Marsala Tita two years agoo."

What ticket was this? I asked.

"He's bombin' dun Marsala Tita, being shot at by th' Chetniks, and the focking Bosnia P'lice pull 'im over. De ye know how fast ye were goin'? Ye were goin' 95 miles per hour." "Nae I wasn't." "How fast d'ye think ye were goin'?" "115 focking miles per hour!" Th' gave him a ticket. He said, "That's why

yer losing this war, th' Serbs 'ave got Kalashnikovs, and th' Muslims have got ray-dar guns!"

Since the day after Bajram was Ash Wednesday, I went to mass that afternoon. The church was old and freezing. Where the stained-glass windows would've been there was now only the opaque plastic. Everyone bunched together in the pews at the front, and we kept our coats, gloves, and hats on. Three priests in brightly colored ceremonial robes said the mass. In the first two pews to the right, eight women sang the hymns. Their beautiful voices rose to the stone eaves above them and hung in the vaults of the ceiling like smoke carried and dispersed by a breeze. I suddenly became overcome with emotion, moved by the simple, transcendent faith of these people who, after all they'd suffered, still believed God hadn't deserted them, and I began to cry. I was kneeling and the women were singing and I kept my face hidden in my praying hands so no one could see my tears. I wasn't ashamed, I just wanted to be unintrusive to my fellow worshippers and private in my own swirl of emotions. We lined up to receive the ashes and when I came before the priest and he applied the dark cross on my forehead, I realized that even though I couldn't understand what he was saying in Serbo-Croat, I knew: We are dust and to dust we shall return, and I thought what an amazing place I was in to be reminded of that.

When I left the church it was a little after 5:00 and it was already dark. I



An Italian soldier stands guard at a NATO checkpoint.

**Suki says she doesn't know why the war started. "Somebody told me, 'You just can't live together,' and I don't know why. We lived together before the war and it was great."**



*A young boy in  
Pazaric, a village  
high in the mountains  
above Sarajevo.*



A popular pub faces the market (below) where 37 people were killed by mortar fire in August 1995.

**"I will never forgive," says Denis, "because I lost too many friends. In eight months, I lost ten people from my family. It's not a thing you can forget."**

hurried along Marsala Tita, past the chicken-bone intersection at Dure Dakovic that was the notorious Sniper Alley. I was late to meet Suki at the Trust Pub to interview her. She had found Loren and me last night at the pub, latching onto us in the hope that we needed an interpreter.

The pub was too noisy, so we went to a café further down the street. There she told me she was 19 years old—I thought she was in her late 20s—and worked for the television station as a music assistant, matching music to programming and translating English-language movies into Serbo-Croat. She was paid a mere 90 deutsche marks (\$60) a month with an additional 100 DM for each movie, but she was lucky if she got one a month of those to do. Which was why she was so eager to work for us at her declared rate of 150 DM a day. Her résumé was thin, she'd only interpreted once before as far as I could make out, but her English was good and knowing that two days' pay equaled three months' salary, it would have been selfish not to give it to her.

She is a pretty woman with intelligent, distrustful eyes, thick lips and a thick nose, and thick brown hair to the nape of her neck, parted in the middle. She pursed her lips a lot when she talked, as if acknowledging and dismissing a thought at the same time. She sat back in her chair as she smoked, sneaking her right arm out to flick the ash into the ashtray. She smoked incessantly.

In her husky accent, she said she felt older than her

age—"this is problem with war"—but that she doesn't want to leave Sarajevo, because it's even harder to get work outside Bosnia, especially in Croatia, where they "hate Bosnians." She herself doesn't hate either Croats or Serbs. "Why should I must hate someone if he is Serb, or Croatian? I mean, if he is good with me, I don't care, be'lee me. I know one girl, she's from Zagreb and she came here and she said, 'You are great people, you don't hate us, you don't make jokes about us.'"

On the first day of the war, a rocket flew into her family's living room. They had no idea why or, for the first seven days of the siege, what was happening.

"We just hear shouting all around. We are panicked. We was thinking, oh it will pass. All the time when war starts we are listening to the news, to the radio, and they didn't know, they told us there are some Serbs on the street, they want some revenge [for a Serb killed at a wedding by a Muslim]. All television was lying, Serbian television talked like we are bad people, we killed all Serbs in Sarajevo."

She says she doesn't know why the war started. "Somebody told me, 'You just can't live together,' and I don't know why. We lived together before the war and it was





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Love among the ruins: Denis, 21, and his girlfriend Della.

great. When somebody told you a name, it don't mean nothing to you. But now, when someone tells you a name, you just think, 'Oh, he is Serb.' But you don't hate him for that."

The siege preyed on Sarajevans like a Chinese water torture. "All the war, they are telling you it's okay, it's ceasefire, but they are shooting," she remembers. "You walk in the middle of the street, really quiet, in the middle of the day, and you hear bullets and grenades, and you run home. You hear a million times that there is ceasefire, and they say it to move us into the street to kill us." Like most Sarajevans,

Suki lived on rice and beans, and sometimes feed, the dry grain given to farm animals. Meat was contraband: Every once in a while she'd be at a black marketer's house who had meat, and offered it to her. Even though she was hungry, she'd decline it "on principle." A kilo of sugar cost 100 DM in the war. Some nights she'd dream of cookies and chocolate.

Suki spoke of going to hear bands in basements play by candlelight because there was no electricity. "You have a lot of best moments in war. Let's say, one day you have fun, you are with people and you forget everything. That is a best moment, you know. You are drunk and you don't think about nothing. You just want to forget about all that. You really have a great time. But tomorrow is another day."

In the beginning, she thought the war was exciting, like being in a movie. She wanted to fight. Her brother who's two years older became a soldier. But the novelty quickly wore off.

"I think Sarajevo will need a lot of time—no listen, Sarajevo will never be the same like before," she says as she drags on her cigarette, the words coming out of the smoke. Around us other people are drinking coffee and beers. We could be in any café in any European city. "I didn't blame Serbs for this—when I'm angry with somebody, when I want to kill somebody, you know, that somebody must do something to me. But how can I hate all Serbs? You have Serbs who are good people, be/lie me, and you just can't blame them for this war."

Her family lived in Grbavica at the beginning of the war; she was born and raised in that suburb. The Serbs took it over immediately and snipers who shot at Sniper Alley fired from what had been her apartment building. She recalled how, before the war, the soldiers used to play with her and her friends, show them their weapons, and tell them jokes. "We didn't know they weren't our soldiers," she says now.

When she was a little girl, she asked her grandfather, who had fought in World War I (which started in Sarajevo), what it had been like. He replied it wasn't interesting, saying, "What can I tell you?" and that he couldn't explain. She says she could never understand that, but she does now.

We left to walk back to the hotel, to meet Loren for dinner. It had started to snow again, and the sidewalks were slippery. Suki put her arm in mine as we came to the intersection at Dure Dakovic and Marsala Tita and said, "Do you realize we are walking on the most dangerous street in the world right now?" I looked up at the flakes of snow falling and the

snow-covered trees and the white park beyond the railings freshly trimmed white, and I realized I didn't.

**Oslobodjenje, Sarajevo's newspaper, published every day of the war,** despite its journalists being killed or wounded by snipers, its building being totally destroyed, having to move several times, and running so painfully short of paper that they sometimes printed only 300 copies of a two-page edition, which was posted in cafés and buildings so as many people as possible could read it. Paper donated from around the world was smuggled through the tunnel under the airport. As one of their chief editors, Mehmet Halilovic, told me, "Our people can live without bread, without milk, but they can't live without newspaper."

Today, *Oslobodjenje* (which means "liberation" and began publishing during the Second World War to oppose the Nazis) is housed in a small building on a square tucked in the folds of the streets behind Marsala Tita. Suki and I went to meet their editor and journalists.

There were about a dozen people in the "computer room" on the ground floor, where they make up the pages of what is now a 16-to-20-page edition, with a circulation of up to 7,000. A handful of operators sat behind long-outdated machines, several others sat on or stood around a couch in the middle of the room, smoking and drinking coffee poured from a large, copper Turkish pot. The room was cloudy with smoke. A small radio perched on a filing cabinet was playing George Michael's "Jesus to a Child." I noticed the curtains were closed over the large windows, even though it wasn't sunny outside, and I asked Antonio, the journalist showing me around, why. "Memory," he shrugged, meaning "habit," left over from working during the war with snipers shooting whatever they could see.

Upstairs the offices are overcrowded but cheerful. Journalists without desk space sit in the hall in stiff-backed chairs, as if waiting outside a doctor's office. Mehmet, who takes time to talk to me, despite having told *Oslobodjenje's* brave story hundreds of times, credited the foreign press stationed in Sarajevo with helping them with information, and talked about the illogical courage of his reporters getting so close to the fighting to report the news that literally meant life and death to their readers.

In one of the offices that seemed to comprise their newsroom, leaves from the newspaper were strewn around with manuscripts and faxes of foreign journals' stories. I heard the long-forgotten sound of a typewriter as a worn-looking man with black hair combed over his baldness struck the keys. Here the culture journalist told me that one of the changes she'd noticed since the end of the war was young people weren't listening to classical music as much, and she thought that was a shame. She also thought that the war had changed the "imagination" of people who wrote about culture. "Pain is a good inspiration," she said.

From the newspaper we went to the market. I wanted to see where the notorious massacre had occurred which precipitated NATO bombing the Serb positions in the hills, which ended the siege of Sarajevo, and the war.

The market is much tinnier than I imagined, about the size of a small parking lot. The rows of uniform, dark-green stalls are packed so tightly together they created the illusion of being under one roof. The narrow aisles are no wider than my shoulders. Hundreds of people were shopping on August 28, 1995, when two shells landed and exploded in the late morning, killing 37. Suki showed me the two shell holes, the larger one, about the size of a hubcap, at the edge of the market, the smaller one in the middle. Around each hole was a spray of shrapnel holes, like many-toed claw marks. It was raining lightly and the large hole had collected a puddle. Rain water dripped from the shiny edges of the stalls' awnings.

Suki had been 100 meters away when the bomb hit. She described

*continued on page 114*



A bombed-out hospital.

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# Doing the Math

The mainstream media calls off the heterosexual AIDS scare. Celia Farber wonders what took so long.

Anyone who thinks mass delusions are a thing of the past should read "Health Hazard: AIDS Fight Is Skewed by Federal Campaign Exaggerating Risks," published in the *Wall Street Journal* on May 1, 1996. The article hammered home a gigantic truth that has been struggling to burst from the barn for several years: AIDS (the way the CDC has defined it) is virtually nonexistent among heterosexuals with no risk factors for HIV. Coauthored by Atlanta bureau chief Amanda Bennett and staff writer Anita Sherpe, the front-page article is the result of a yearlong investigation, which concluded that "...for most heterosexuals, the risk from a single act of sex [is] smaller than the risk of ever getting hit by lightning. In the U.S., the disease waxes, and remains, largely the scourge of gay men, intravenous drug users, their sex partners, and their newborn children."

The *Wall Street Journal* article is not by any means the first to report this. Many journalists have struggled to bring these same facts to light, only to find that the political atmosphere was so charged that reporting on the matter became impossible. As SPIN explained in "Fatal Distraction" (June 1992), the attempt to label AIDS a heterosexual disease was calculated from the outset—it was an outright fund-raising tactic employed by AIDS organizations and activists, who thought, perhaps correctly, that money would flow only if AIDS was perceived as "everybody's disease." The consequences of this seemingly warmhearted campaign have, according to the *Journal*, been serious, and very detrimental to the collective good. Funds that may indeed have saved lives had the educational campaign been better targeted were instead squandered across a broad population, most of who were never at risk. Conversely, those of who have always been at highest risk have been left largely outside the rather glibly



world of AIDS education, fund-raising, and "awareness." "The emphasis on the broad reach of this disease," the article stated, "has virtually ensured that precious funds won't go where they are most needed."

Though gay men and IV-drug users now account for 83 percent of all AIDS cases, no funds are elicited specifically for people in those groups. Instead, the bulk of the CDC's \$584 million AIDS-prevention budget goes toward combating the disease among heterosexual women, college students, and others at very low risk. Critics have been saying for years that there

is a central dishonesty to the belabored claim that women are the fastest-growing group: In fact, in hard numbers, fewer women are becoming infected. According to a statistical analysis by Paul Philpott, editor and publisher of the contrarian newsletter *Reappraising AIDS*, the figures for women break down as follows: In 1993, there were 16,824 new AIDS cases among women—15.9 percent of the 105,990 annual total. In 1994, women accounted for 14,081 new cases, which was 17.7 percent of the 79,672 total for that year. Philpott concludes: "While 16 percent fewer women in 1994 were diagnosed with AIDS than in 1993, the fraction of women among total new cases was 11 percent higher. In other words, women are grabbing a larger piece of a shrinking pie." More important, these women are getting AIDS not because there is a trend toward women getting AIDS but because they are IV-drug users and crack users—that, not their gender, is the risk factor.

Comparisons to the Emperor and his non-clothing have been made, but there exists no better analogy for the trumpeted heterosexual epidemic. The public has been threatened with this impending doom since 1984, and no amount of statistical analysis or straightforward observation has impeded the scaremongers in their quest for a culturally metastasized fear. As a "better safe than sorry" logic was taken to perverse extremes, anybody who attempted to quantify the threat, analyze the figures, or in any way cast light on this "impending catastrophe" has been excoriated, picketed, banned, ridiculed, and even fired. The most famous example is the conservative author Michael Fumento, whose landmark 1990 book *The Myth Of Heterosexual AIDS* detailed the cynical tactics of public-health authorities to fabricate an epidemic that was never more than a theoretical possibility. Why? To raise money for AIDS, sure, but also to raise what is euphemistically called "awareness" about the deadly, wildfire potential of the



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## OUT OF BOUNDS

by Deb Schwartz



# Life in the Fast Lane

Swimmer **Gary Hall, Jr.**, hates training, bags small races, and gets away with working only eight minutes a year. So how can such a slack have a shot at four gold medals?

IN THE HEAT of one of the world's driest deserts blooms an Olympic swimmer set to win four gold medals this summer in Atlanta. Gary Hall, Jr., a 6'6", 167-pound sprinter who rockets through races but still has trouble getting to practice on time, rolls down the basking freeway in his immaculate, magenta '82 Volkswagen Microbus, bends his golden-brown frame over the steering wheel, and pops a Grateful Dead bootleg into the tape deck. "My job isn't too bad," Hall says in a drawl so slow it makes you wonder how he gets anywhere fast. "You have to concentrate about twice a year. You show up, do your thing, which hopefully consists of less than four minutes of work, and then you prepare for the next one."

Take away the Rolex and the endless erms, and Hall looks like any average eterna-teen in his white wraparounds, baggy shorts, and sockless Airwalks. But among his clean-cut peers in the world of swimming, Hall stands out as the sport's sole fashion plate. After his team broke the world record for the 400-meter freestyle relay at last summer's Pan Pacific Games, Hall and his teammates met the press in '70s polyester leisure suits and Afro wigs; his training suit last summer was a custom-made maroon job with a big gold star over his package; and just moments before he approached the blocks at March's Olympic

trials, Hall was chilling in leather jeans and a Grateful Dead tie-dye.

On land, Hall's a dreamy pen-end-ink artist with a serious CD habit. But his laid-back nature belies his speed. His coach, double-gold-medalist Troy Dalbey, says Hall is "one of the most talented swimmers who's ever hopped into a pool," and if Hall haggles over training sets and balls on small races, he blows away the competition in those that matter. "A lot of people think he's lazy, but it's all about what's going on in your head when you get into a big race," Dalbey says. "When he steps up on the block, his confidence takes him places that most people never go."

Hall says he has "chlorine in the bloodlines"; and his father, three-time Olympic medalist Gary Hall, Sr., traces his son's champion-quality drive back to his maternal grandfather, Charles Keating, Jr., winner of the 1946 NCAA title in the 200-yard butterfly, but better known as a major player in the savings-and-loan scandals of the 1980s. Keating is now doing time at the Federal Corrections Institution in Tucson for 73 counts of fraud, racketeering, and conspiracy related to his dealings as owner of Lincoln Savings & Loan.

Slouched in a chair under the misters cooling the brick patio of a Tempe, Arizona, café, Hall's face clouds when he discusses Keating's conviction.

Like his father, Hall believes that Keating, whom the *Chicago Tribune* once dubbed "the greediest man in America," was scapegoated. "It was a bad deal gone down. I knew that what was being said wasn't true. I disagreed with how everything happened."

For much of his childhood, Hall's family shared a house with Keating and his wife, Mary Elaine. If Hall can't remember how he learned to swim (his parents say he swam before he walked), he remembers pool time with Keating on the 12-acre family estate and the days he'd ditch school to play gofer at his grandfather's office. "I've always said I was closer to my grandfather than I was to my father," ettests Hall. He tracks his ability to focus back to the emotional period around his grandfather's indictment. "I think there's a very close relation between the feeling I had during that time and the feeling I have when I step up on the blocks," Hall says. "I feel that some bit of rage, and you have to confront that when you race. When your body's going through complete pain, you really figure out who you are."

Hall wasn't always so inspired. When he began to compete the summer after eighth grade, he was so poky that his mother promised him five dollars if he won a race (Hall obliged, shaving 20 seconds off his time). Later, Hall nearly quit during his first winter-training session, prompting arguments with his father, who more than once told him he could continue to swim or peck his bags. "It's like Jekyll and Hyde with Gary," says his father. "He's intensely competitive at a race, but the rest of the time it's hard to get him to lift a finger."

Poolside at the Phoenix Swim Club, a modest, spotless outdoor-pool complex financed and built by Keating's corporation before he went to jail, Hall munches a psychedelically colored fruit roll—his usual pre-practice breakfast—and muses about his upcoming Olympic confrontation with Russian rival Alexander Popov. Hall plans to prep for the games in his usual fashion: listening to Lou Reed and joking around with the few swimmers who aren't freaking out. "Before a race, there are usually a few people who withdraw, there's a guy listening to Megadeth at high volume, and then there's always one guy who looks like he's about to hurt right there." No doubt, Hall will probably hurl when he finishes, but for the time being, he can't wait for his moment in front of the world. "When you get out there, you've got 22 seconds to show them what you've got. It's very draining, but at the same time," he says, grinning like a dope fiend, "it's just pure adrenaline, pure rush." ●





## Mock the Vote

CampPAiN IN THE ASS '96 (<http://3rdmil.com/paiN.html>) is one of a handful of Web sites that are taking an irreverent stab at Bill and Bob's excellent venture to the White House. Updated daily, CampPAiN plays up the absurdities of the presidential posse with Monty Pythonesque animations and *Weekly World News*-style faux reporting. Who knew that a ferret was found burrowing inside Ross Perot's ear? CampPAiN's got the footage! There's also a spot called Target Practice, where you can hurl virtual mollusks at the candidate of your choice. Just make sure to download Netscape 2.0 and the multimedia freeware, Shockwave (<http://www.macromedia.com/>), before calling up the site. Otherwise, you won't be able to see—or hear—the octopus splat.

As its name suggests, Skeleton Closet (<http://www.reachange.org/>) understands that presidential campaigns are all about the cover-up. Run by a nonaffiliated, independent political-action committee called Real People for Real Change, Skeleton Closet digs up the latest dirt on the men who would be kings—and the suckers who got away. For instance, did Pat Buchanan really dodge the Vietnam draft by saying he had Reiter's syndrome, a form of arthritis caused by venereal disease? If you think political gossip is only for those who take politics seriously, then go to Salvo (<http://www.salvo.com/>), which offers "a site made by people who hate politics for people who hate politics." Salvo packs its pages daily with sanguinary screeds on election issues: "We are currently lobbying for legislation that would arm the homeless and train them to hunt pigeons, rats, politicians, and other city vermin for food and skins. While this is no permanent solution to such a serious problem, you gotta admit, it'd be pretty entertaining." If readers don't agree, they can unload their own opinions in the public Firing Range.



**Game Boys** For everyone burned out on the pyrotechnics of the latest carnage contests, Return of Arcade resurrects the lo-fi grace of early-'80s game-room all-stars. A couple of years ago, Microsoft tantalized retrogeeks with the release of Arcade, authentic CD-ROM versions of such classics as *Missile Command* and *Asteroids*. Now Arcade is back with four more reasons to wiggle your joystick: *Pac Man*, *Dig Dug*, *Pole Position*, and *Galaxian*. And yes, the Windows 95-only games feature all the original graphics and sounds. Urgent e-mail to Bill Gates: In the words of Frank Black, "Whatever Happened to Pong?"

## Hands Off

The NoHands Mouse might be the greatest thing to happen to the one-hand-typing crowd since Windows.

As one of the stranger alternatives to the wrist-crunching mouse, the NoHands (\$199) uses two shoe-print-sized foot pedals to move the cursor across the screen. Just slip the pads underneath your desk; the right foot steers, the left foot double-clicks. The NoHands might be great for an online tryst, but otherwise it's probably not worth the hassle. Maneuvering the pedals accurately with your foot is a real pain, and if there isn't such a condition as carpal tunnel of the ankle, there will be soon.



## Kurt Q&A

Forget about murder conspiracies and dream interpretations: The crassest Kurt obsession to hit the Web has got to be Kurt Cobain's Magic Talking 8-Ball (<http://www.webcom.com/xoomb/cobain/askcobain.html>). This site randomly plugs Cobain-interview sound bites into fans' metaphysical queries. Just type a question and click the 8-Ball to hear Cobain's response. Next eponymous live album? "I can't decide." Have you seen Elvis? "I would say, kinda sorta." So, what did he tell you? "I'm a walking, talking bacterial infection." Sorry we asked.



to render its macabre dreamscape: Thomas Dolby produces the eerie music, Doug Beswick (*Allens, The Addams Family*) animates the puppet-like characters, and Beat drawer William S. Burroughs provides the narration. Most important, like all good nightmares, *The Dark Eye* never seems to end.

## Creep Show

Amidst the scramble to come up with a computer game scarier than Doom, a CD-ROM called *The Dark Eye* finds its inspiration in the godfather of horror, Edgar Allan Poe. This *Myst*-like mystery unravels in a haunted Victorian mansion, where each room is based on one of Poe's short stories. Players are cast as either perpetrator or victim: You can be the man burying the coffin in "The Cask of Amontillado," or, if you're into that sort of thing, the one being buried. *The Dark Eye* enlists veteran creep-freaks

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# SPINS

## PLATTER DU JOUR

**7** PATTI SMITH  
*Gone Again*  
Arista

A WELL GONE dry is any artist's worst nightmare. Bob Dylan once said he was struggling to channel consciously what formerly came to him subconsciously. Punk priestess Patti Smith, though, Dylan's biggest fan, seemed to drink from a bottomless "sea of possibility." *Horses* and *Easter* rode the sheer confidence of a young artist who knew she was in her creative prime. "I'm so young, so goddamn young!" she exulted on "Privilege (Set Me Free)." When 1979's *Wave* didn't hit the same ecstatic heights, Smith was savvy enough to heed the writing in the wall.

Her transformation from the sexed-up tomboy who ate men like air into a diaper-changing Buddha of suburbia has been read as everything from betrayal of her rebel principles to feminist sellout and fuck-you to fame. The truth might be much simpler—that Smith knew her coffers were empty. Any self-respecting Romantic hero fears mediocrity more than silence; just look at Kurt Cobain.

In fact, the most wrenching song on *Gone Again*, Smith's first album since 1988's AOR-bore *Dream of Life*, laments Cobain's suicide at the age of 27. On the sinister "About a Boy," Smith sits shiva over the boy "beyond it all": beyond hope, beyond caring—about himself or those he left behind. "Toward another kind of peace / Toward the great emptiness," she howls, practically spitting out the last syllable.

Metamorphosis has always been Smith's muse, but today it wears the face of Death. Within one month of each other in 1994, Smith buried both her husband of 14 years, Fred "Sonic" Smith of MCS legend, and her brother Todd; old friend (and former Patti Smith Band keyboardist) Richard Sohl died that same year. Smith and Fred had already begun collaborating on the Bad Company-ish title song and "Summer Cannibals"; save for "Wicked Messenger" (from Dylan's recovery album *John Wesley Harding*), Smith oversaw the writing of the rest of them herself. Old friends (Television's Tom Verlaine, John Cale) and former bandmates (guitarist Lenny Kaye, drummer Jay Dee Daugherty) were recruited to conjure up the living, breathing ghosts of her past.

Of course, they're no longer the same rock'n'roll niggas ushering in a new age. Smith is now issuing jeremiads rather than manifestos. Nothing in her back catalogue prophesies her current music's hellucinator strength. Though the songs shift from sturdy bar-band vamps to thorny, open-ended art rock and simple folk, the arrangements stay skeletal, the mood gloomy.

Almost 19th-century in its theses-and-thys, *Gone Again* is an elegy that seems to exist on its own plane. With nods to Yeats and Whitman, Smith adorns her marital bliss with mythological status: Fred takes shape as a raven, a reinbow, teardrops from heaven. "My Madrigal" is the tragic book-end to *Wave*'s lovestruck "Frederick." "Oh till death do us part" Smith wails, rescuing a lyrical cliché with shamanistic power. Her husky, knowing,



blueswomen's voice is more powerful than ever, but she's taken to eping Dylan's loping cadences and nasal whine, odd stylistic choices for a Jersey girl who made her mark purging sound from her very entrails.

A Jehovah's Witness with a pagan's heart and an ironic mind, Smith's doubts about the afterlife are *Gone Again*'s running conflict, giving the album its tension. Allusions to reincarnation and pearly gates collide with visions of a black void that would scare the Sartre out of anyone. "Oh, to be not anyone / Gone," she incants almost wistfully on "Beneath the Southern Cross," over Verlaine's shimmering guitar mantra and a funeral organ backdrop Cale seems to have lifted from Nico's *The Marble Index*.

Such songs feel like open wounds, but the pain is an intensely private one, one that only longtime fans would want to share. *Gone Again* is as raw and self-indulgent as most art-as-therapy, and there's no excuse for a poet of Smith's caliber to rhyme "died" with "cried" on two separate occasions. But we listen transfixed because she has "opened up [her] veins" to the "summer cannibals" after starving us for so long, because

the former tuff-grrrl is now so achingly vulnerable but would be a no-show at her own pity party.

On the surface, she's merely spreading legacies like crematorium ashes—in recent poetry she has paid tribute to the artistry of everyone from her late best friend, photographer Robert Mapplethorpe, to River Phoenix. (What is she, chopped liver?) Once, her tributes to rebel heroes were a passive-aggressive act of assertion: Citing Rimbaud and Keith Richards as her inspirations was a way of projecting herself into their league. Today, pushing 50, Smith seems unsure of her own talents, and it's disturbing to hear the visionary who spawned a thousand lesser impersonators struggling to find her voice again.

"I don't have any particular message right now," Smith said recently, but the juice of inspiration comes in strange spurts. On "Dead to the World," a gentle, countrified number with an actually cheerful melody, she chronicles an artistic reawakening at the touch of a seductive male specter. And at a show in California's genteel Sonoma County last year, Smith's version of "Gloria" worked the aging crowd up into such a fervor that things got ugly with security. Don't forget who you are, you're a rock'n'roll star.

—SIA MICHEL

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## RECORDS



### 7 SCREAMING TREES

*Dust*  
Epic

What do you do when your moment expires on you? The question hangs in the air of Seattle's better microbrew bars, as grunge boys scramble to avoid becoming the hair bands of the '90s. They could take a lesson from the Screaming Trees. Call it the Pre-Raphaelite solution: Like those Victorian gentleman artists, who crafted irresistible scenes of a mythic time that really only existed in their heads, the Trees have found in the psychedelic era a

sings as violins swell and the mountainlike Conner brothers (Gary Lee, guitar; Ven, bass) rumble acoustically behind him. He thinks he's gonna die in "Witness," walks the ghost town that used to be his city in the Southern rocker "Dying Days," has seen what you've never seen in "Dime Western," and retreats to a monklike cave in the oddly jaunty "All I Know." This is one mystical dude, a Romantic poet reincarnated as a lumberjack.

Two things save Lanegan from the quicksand of his own profundity: his voice, a fertile baritone that he used to push into a blend roughness, but which he's trained to a nuanced croon; and the bright hues of the music, which make all those deep thoughts fun instead of oppressive. In its own way, *Dust* refuses to be just another rock record; producer George Drakoulias (who has a mixed track record with this vintage thing, having helmed the Black Crowes' hits and the Jayhawks' flop) clearly taught the Trees how to mix their paints, with strings, organ, and tons of multi-tracked vocals adding thickness and color to the sound. And the knack Lanegan shares with his late friend Kurt Cobain—for writing a testy pop hook despite himself—shines throughout. Reel '60s psychedelia rarely sounded this explosive; just goes to show you, fantasies are lovelier the second time around.

ANN POWERS

### 6 NEIL YOUNG WITH CRAZY HORSE

*Broken Arrow*  
Reprise



prism refracting their most florid thoughts. From the rega riffs that kick off "Halo of Ashes" to the fortified Moby Grape-isms of "Gospel Plow," *Dust*, the Trees' ninth album, dreams so hard of a world beyond grunge that the very landscape springs verdant and rich around it.

Chief Tree Mark Lanegan shares more with the Pre-Raphaelites than a talent for history-onics: he's gloriously sentimental, and given to worshipping the same sort of deathly maiden. Lanegan is forever peering over the cliff of his own mortality—"Halfway here / Halfway there / All along I've been a traveler, yeah," he

Tuneful, reflective, indomitable, marked for eccentricity with a dim, meandering, were-those-crowd-noises-tacked-on-in-the-studio? version of the Jimmy Reed stop blues "Baby What You Want Me to Do," *Broken Arrow* represents no apparent diminishment in the stock and trade of everybody's favorite rock'n'roll survivor, who is vitality itself. Resist the myth of his changeability; like all his best work, the amazing 50-year-old product factory's ninth '90s album (albeit the fifth featuring all-new material) sticks to a funkless folk-rock that milks minimal materials for maximum expressiveness and pleasure in both homespun and electrifying guises. But that's not to say the old cow is giving up as much grade A as she used to.

Because *Broken Arrow* features the gallumph of Billy Talbot and Ralph

Molina, Young's natural rhythm section since 1969, I prefer it to last year's Pearl Jam collaboration, where the jet-propulsion throw him off-pace a little. But I doubt most listeners will agree. Qualitatively, the album feels like a cross between such half-lost mid-'70s efforts as *On the Beach* and the slightly sub-par early-'80s stuff that began Young's depressing Reagan-era slide. If anything, it isn't lost enough—better realized than *On the Beach*, it lacks that cult item's weird sense of context. In fact, it makes you wonder whether Young hasn't grown so confident in his aversion to complacency that he could play out his career as solidly and unmonotonously as, say, Muddy Waters—never dismissed, but taken for granted.

Who can say? Not you, not me, not Neil. No rock'n'roller has ever reached this place before, and it's conceivable that in a few years the standouts here will sound as classically as 1989's "Wrecking Ball." I'm especially partial to "Big Time," his unimpeachable vibrant refusal to fade away, and the quietly indelible "Music Arcade," which hints slyly at the opposite: "I really didn't mean to stay as long as I have / So I'll be movin' on." The three songs stretched over the CD's first 26 minutes offer as much glacial guitar as any grunge dikehard could wish, and nothing here is merely dull. Nevertheless, no pitch of permanent vitality will ever answer the artist's eternal question of what to do for an encore. In rock'n'roll, taken for granted is never enough. **ROBERT CHRISTgau**

#### 4 METALLICA

**Load**  
Elektra

Metallica's great technical innovation, the thing that launched thrash metal and more copycat bands than anything since *Meet the Beatles*, was finally this: They were the band that finally divorced hard rock from the blues. Metallica songs instead sprawl through half-digested classical-guitar licks, sports-chant choruses, and hammering, unison riffs based around martial drum tattoos.

On *Load*, except maybe for the abstraction of the lyrics and James Hetfield's distinctive voice, a raspy groaning thing with an effective range of about a minor third, there's practically nothing that sounds like Metallica: no rat-a-tat regimental drumming, no oddly sterile click-

track synchronization with chilly oceans of space between the notes. The famous Metallica guitar sound—precise hollow bursts of white noise with the midrange cut all the way out—is nowhere to be heard. Kirk Hammett's guitar solos are almost Skynyrdian; the riffs chug like Raging Slab outtakes; Lars Ulrich's drumming is flat and pedestrian. A prominent section of one song—I swear to God—even sounds as if it were lifted from Hole. Metallica's predilection for the rambling, multi-part epic, almost charming when their music passed for stoner Stovinsky, seems pretty dumb applied to the sort of side-long boogie jams that went out of fashion before Greta married Cher.

The last time Metallica recorded an album, the pop-structured though recognizably Metallica-esque *Metallica*, Lollapalooza was just beginning, and the term "Seattle sound" referred to Queensrÿche. That album, which could be seen as a metalist's response to the radio-friendly Stratsmanship of bands like Guns N' Roses and Mötley Crüe, pushed Metallica into the mainstream for the first time, but had the misfortune of coming out on the cusp of grunge, which rejected the commercial values the band had only just begun to embrace. It's even harder to figure where Metallica might fit now on AOR playlists dominated by Stone Temple Pilots and Bush. *Load* still seems like a response to *Appetite for Destruction*, but one recorded about a decade too late.

JONATHAN GOLD

**8** **LAMBARENA**

**Back to Africa**  
Sony Classical

## 7 AKENDENGUE

**Maladité**  
Mélodie/Qualiton

Gabon's Pierre Akendengue is one of African music's best-kept secrets. Born in 1944, Akendengue went blind while studying psychology in Paris, subsequently becoming a noted dramatist and poet. And though he's released nearly a dozen albums since 1974—most notably *Silence* and his greatest-hits compilation *Passé Composé*—it's taken the international success of *Bachata to Africa* (originally issued in France in 1994 and Akendengue's first American release) to highlight his

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neglected folk alchemy. Akendengue distills tribal rhythms into a meticulous African chamber music.

Of course, if you'd told me I'd be grooving to a dodgy mixture of Bach's greatest hits with the native rhythms of several of Gabon's 42 ethnic groups, I'd have politely suggested you stick it up your deep forest. But that's the scoop on Bach



guitarist Maïka Munan appears whenever Akendengue's capital-A art gets out of hand.) Akendengue proves that great African music contains more than good-time kings and township chants; it can, in fact, get downright architectonic. (Mélodie/Qualiton, 24-02 40th Ave., Long Island City, NY 11101)

RICHARD GEHR

## 6 DE LA SOUL Stakes Is High Tommy Boy

On "Betta Listen," the chippie Posdnuos is about to bed confesses that "I've owned thoughts of you since that song 'Meenie Meenie' / Can't believe you about to be all up in between me." And hey, I can relate; who among us didn't fall in love with rap all over again upon first hearing "Buddy" back in '89? Pos, Trugoy the Dove, and Maseo are a long way from that daisy age, though. On the cranky *Stakes Is High*, ten out of 17 tracks accuse other rappers of being "false tongues" who "try keeping it real" but "should be keeping it right." By the out-and-out fed-up title cut, Dove is "sick of awole-head rappers with their sickening raps."

From the moment they sampled "Peg" on their debut record, De La Soul have always been more "lawn" than "street" (even for white kids, Steely Dan is a signifier of terminal nerdiness), and this is hardly their first dust-up with the forces of realism—the struggle for street cred was the making and unmaking of 1991's conflicted *De La Soul Is Dead*. But it's especially dismaying on the heels of *Buhoone Mindstate*, which trotted out Maseo Parker, Shortie No Mas, and Takagi Kan in a demonstration of rap's multigenerational, multigendered, and multinational possibilities.

Though the wordplay is typically sharp and elusive ("She was a ghetto philosopher / Yeah, you know the type / Thinking Mary J. and Sade understood her strife") on *Stakes*, De La's musical choices have gone by the wayside. Recording for the first time without producer Prince Paul (whose work on the Gravediggaz record indicates how important he was to their sound), De La Soul have settled for a series of serviceable, midtempo grooves. There's a not-unpleasant nimbleness about *Stakes*, but toying with a groove, not merely establishing it, has always

to Africa, which pays tribute to the "sound world" of Bach devotee Dr. Albert Schweitzer, who for most of his long life tended to Gabon's ill in the town of Lambarene. French composer/producer Hughes de Courson and Akendengue spent a hundred days in the studio weaving Bach fugues and cantatas with suitable Gabonese melodies performed by a dozen different ensembles. Brazilian guest percussionist Nana Vasconcelos plonks and gibbers like a syncretic alien throughout.

*Bach to Africa* serves as a nearly perfect dialogue between European and African equals. The Bach is beautiful, needless to say, but Akendengue's crystalline arrangements of Gabon's tribal chants sound equally magnificent. In "Bombé," the Christian death trip of Bach's "St. John's Passion" resonates splendidly with the hand-clapping incantations of Gabon's Boulli religion (whose adherents consume the iboga root as a psychedelic sacrament). Europe's French horn plays off the Ndjobi antelope horn amid interweaving choral voices.

Akendengue is no less concerned with the big sacred picture on his luxurious and mostly acoustic solo album, *Meladité*. For the title track, a meditation on dis-ease, he gets a native chorus to mimic a looping trance machine. Other songs concern God, political sovereignty, African music, sibling love, and the nature of being. Akendengue roams freely through musical idioms as well, from the folkie circles of "Eau Claire" to the dance party in "Eleke." Like Bartók or Stravinsky, he adores his country's folk music but feels no qualms about taking it to a more complexly personal level. (Fortunately, soukous



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# SCREAMING TREES

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been the appeal of a De La record. Only the final cut, "Big Brother Beat," sporting guitar noise, synth bleeps, and shouts of "I Mandekal!" comes close to capturing that vibe.

Too bad. The reign of the gangstas has been long and often wearisome, but the recent success of the Fugees demonstrates that there's a potentially huge audience for Native Tongue-type stylings. Which would seem to leave room for hip-hop's most open-minded creators to move us with another left-field masterpiece. But all *Stakes* offers up is Pos slugging rappers for "projecting like ya hard / When in fact ya quite vaginal." Meanie.

JEFF SALAMON

### 8 KRISTINE W *Land of the Living* RCA

The last white American female to come on this strong in the world of dance music was Madonna. Kristine W shares that pioneer's flair for exhibitionism. This daughter of a country singer is a former Miss Washington (and winner in the Miss America swimsuit and talent competitions) who for the last several years has been the star of her own Las Vegas revue, where she struts much plumage while belting the classics, such as those of her idol, Donna Summer. But unlike Madonna, Kristine Weltz's vocal talents include both torch-song croons and gospel shouts. She radiates the pain and exultation essential to the religious club-music experience, and she's more introspective than the average diva. After a series of forgettable singles with producers who tried to package her as a generic R&B queen, she has teamed up with Rollo and Rob D.—respected English club-music creators—to turn out one of the most artful song-oriented dance albums in years.

At once pop and progressive, *Land of the Living* serves up jazz and soul flavors amid shimmering electronic trance grooves and pounding house beats. Although she could easily sell her soul for Adult Contemporary commerciality, this classy anomaly opts for a far more edgy transatlantic discobaret fusion. When she sings a ballad, dreamy trip-hop rhythms percolate beneath her pensive musings. On "Sweet Mercy Me," one of the few downtempo tracks, ethereal textures turn caustic and rake the singer over Nine Inch Nails noise. "Jazzin'"

brings real horns into the Latin house mix, while "Breathe" and "Prairie Day" prove the singer has a potential future as a porno chanteuse.

What Kristine W does better than any other singer is ride the dance-music equivalent of Nirvana's roller coaster of dynamics. Just as alternative rock pumps up the drama with the multiple shocks that come from shifting from subdued verse to



screaming chorus and back again, Rollo and Rob D. drop the beat and build it back up to create the highs and lows of the soundscape: the epic mixing style that's the latest club buzz. Although this often sprawling style is here mostly condensed into single-ready tracks, Rollo's Big Mix of "One More Try" shows what the team can do free of time restraints. Clocking in at nine and a half minutes, the tour de force is the anthemic techno equivalent of Thelma Houston's disco masterpiece "Don't Leave Me This Way"—a pleading, ultimately triumphant testimony of will and desire. With the market for smart, substantial dance-pop proven by recent Everything but the Girl, this serious showgirl should be able to give up her night job any day now.

BARRY WALTERS

### 4 BLUES TRAVELER *Live From the Fall* A&M

I told my older brother, who claims that boogie terrorized actual '70s people more than art-rock or singer-songwriter mush, that Blues Traveler are okay. He said I ate too much Taco Bell. I insisted that Blues Traveler's new one, a bunch of concert recordings, is a move the band had to make after nearly turning into TV superstars with "Run-around" and "Hook," the way-catchy singles that drove their fourth album (*Four*) past sales of five million. He winced, maintained that important boogie occasionally occurs, but that usually it amounts to guitar parts repeated

"Some records just leave you speechless."  
—Billboard

The second album from the artist Rolling Stone called the "brightest hope for '94," and Vibe magazine named "the future of Funk."

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Clayton Krumholz  
Photography by [illegible]

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with mind-numbing monotony and no attention to surrounding musical context. Cool, I said, just like techno.

Boogie, you know, outside of the bluesy English stuff that the Pooh Sticks like, came from the South—like Lynryd Skynyrd, who my brother grudgingly praises, or ZZ Top before they became TV superstars playing new wave, or the kind of “rock” that now only Travis Tritt remembers. But Blues Traveler figure that somebody outside new country has still gotta boogie. They’re from the New York/New Jersey area, so on *Live From the Fall*, they do a 13-minute jam called “Closing Down the Park,” about authorities sweeping out undesirable. Of the three songs that begin the album, this kicks hardest. All are long, blurry, spacey excursions with that righteous harmonica from Blues Traveler chairman John Popper. Then they do a slower, catchier thing called “Regarding Steven” about a kid with no family that reminds you of how the Grateful Dead, old masters of California rich-hippie boogie, sometimes stood in for one.

The music, as I’ve tried to clue in my brother, doesn’t elicit for Dave Matthews-style importance, exactly. It shoots for comfort and usefulness. In the last quarter of the record, Blues Traveler “Interpolate,” as they say in their credits (what veudevilans), tunes like “The Inchworm” and Beck’s “Loser” into an endless jam of “Go Outside and Drive” and “Low Rider” before doing their stout (yet mystifying) version of John Lennon’s “Imagine.” It’s all very hippie-diddle-do-everything-you-like-we-can-play-anything-in-the-key-of-boogie. You can, I told my brother, just turn it up, pretend to get high, and forget everything except Blues Traveler’s relaxed blast. You can choose to visit the new Blues Traveler plenit of old boogie, where TV superstars do and don’t yet exist.

JAMES HUNTER

## 7 GRUPO EXTERMINADOR

**Dedicado A Mis Novias**  
Fonovisa

How to dance to “El Venao”: Stiffen legs like Frankenstein’s monster, open eyes wide, spread fingers above forehead like antlers, stomp around to loco tropical rhythms. (First couple times I saw it, I didn’t realize the words were about a deer, so the hand part frightened me a little.) Punctuated by monster-clearing-its-throat gurgles and originated

by Dominican Republic merenguers Los Cantantes, “El Venao” is the latest ’90s smesh (after “Mecerene” and “Vueia Vueia”) that combos all over the Latin map compete over.

Grupo Exterminador, four Mexican cowhands from the Rio Grande whose name kills bugs deadlier than Black Flag and who wear clothes seemingly designed from fancy window curtains, do the catchiest “El Venao” I’ve heard. They also do a nearly identical song called “El Tiburón,” which my *diccionario* translates as “The Shark,” leading me to wonder how the shark dance goes. Their record label told me Exterminador are a *banda* group, maybe because they wiggle their poika oom-pahs with plenty of accordion sustain and do lots of cover remakes. (Banda wreck every song there is; e.g., Banda Bahía’s 1995 album had renditions of “Ghostbusters,” “My Way,” Los Fabulosos Cadillacs’ “El Matador,” and Pat Boone’s “Speedy Gonzales”) But Exterminador’s more Tex-Mexy border stuff, including half of this album, is too slow for banda—it’d be feirly orthodox *conjunto* or *cortido* if not for how the songs all start with sounds like clanking celtine glesses, horses’ hooves, cocks fighting, and guns executing benditos.

Exterminador’s real category, I think, is “novely ad.” The most energetic tracks on *Dedicado* are also the silliest—the deer and shark ones, and their cover of 2 in a Room’s 1990 hip-house hit “Wiggle It.” Exterminador play the song even faster and looser, with voice-catched drum rolls, “Hasta la vista, bay-bee” endings, squeaze boxes honking “shave and a haircut, two bits,” kids calling-and-responding louder than the singer. Grown men chirp like little girls chirping like birds, and Juan Corona shouts out questions end leads cheers so his band can set up vamps within vamps, expanding polka beats into genuine Ceribbean funk. In 1996, this might be the most brand-new beg pape’s got. (Fonovisa, 7710 Haskell Ave., Van Nuys, CA 91408)

CHUCK EDDY

## 7 HELTAN SKELTAN

**Nocturnal**  
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and the jiggified, Mafioso name-checking, Moët-sipping Easterner—have devolved into cartoonish, predictable narratives. But fortunately, trees do grow in Brooklyn; and some of 'em bear the fruit of redemption. In 1993 a little-known group called Black Moon released an album that would become an underground classic, *Ente Da Stage*. Thus was born the Bootcamp Clik and their distinct brand of sonic mayhem: quirky, Caribbean-influenced lyrical phrasing atop deep, moody tracks. Black Moon's offering was soon followed by Smif-N-Wessun's equally compelling *Dah Shinin'*. Now Bootcamp's third edition, Helltah Skeltah, release their own opus, *Nocturnal*.

As former members of the Deceptions (a Brooklyn-based gang that terrorized NYC high schools in the late '80s), Ruck and Rock—Helltah Skeltah's twin cannons—could be expected to do the obvious: rehash how many broken bodies they've left in their wake. Uh-hh-uhhh. *Nocturnal*'s menace doesn't come from self-propaganda. Helltah Skeltah derive their edge from the dynamic vocal presence delivered by Rock's low-pitched growls and Ruck's irritatingly tinged mutterings; dark, gritty production; and the duo's creative song structuring, as on "Therapy," a scintillating bit of back-and-forth wordplay which has Ruck playing the gruff psychiatrist to Rock's tormented patient, and "Sean Price," where Ruck appropriates Super Cat's haunting lament from "I'm Not Sure Anymore" to chilling effect.

*Nocturnal* never takes the hard-edged vibe over the line. The two MCs possess a dry sense of humor that gives the album a multidimensional feel. *Nocturnal*'s only setbacks are length—toward the end of the album the songs begin to suffer "sundallike" syndrome—and that despite their technical prowess (lyrical delivery, tone, etc.), Ruck and Rock don't evidence the lyrical substance demanded of top-flight mike wielders. Nevertheless, *Nocturnal* is a stimulating record; get your hardcore thing and leave the Versace and the Colombians at home.

SELWYN SEYFU HINDS

## 8 D GENERATION No Lunch Columbia

D Generation is an endearingly cranky cartoon of New York City youth gone mild—ex-hardcore brats

who vandalized the East Village in the early '80s and never left, eventually helping launch a club (Coney Island High) just so they could dance funky to records by hometown Queens heroes Kiss and the Ramones. Yet their eagerly cynical glam-punk remained a secret equation—if you weren't on the guest list it didn't add up. And after 1994's listlessly recorded, lamely promoted debut, bartenders winked free drinks in other directions, like at those gate-crashing Spacehog binges.

But all that's history to the curb with D Gen's unceremoniously named *No Lunch*, which romantically animates the no-future in New York's



dreaming like a John Garfield movie with spiky hair. Sharply produced by new wave elder Ric Ocasek (Bad Brains, Weezer), the band strikes a pose like the Dead Boys all dressed up for your love, i.e., not-so-young, still friggin' loud, and too snotty for anybody's good. On "Scorch," the opener, guitarists Danny Sage and Richard Bacchus snarl at each other for a stunning 1:17. "She Stands There" follows rapid-fire, with singer Jesse Malin squealing an unexpectedly nuanced croon amid the tattoo-fleeting power-pop. "Capital Offender," the potential sellout anthem, has a relaxed, *sh-sh* chorus and an almost quaint storyline about a star-crossed rocker who shoots his A&R man outside a liquor store. As Malin observes (of himself?) on "Too Loose," "Some call it art and make it clear / You're not so smart."

Far readier for their close-up than two years ago, the band re-recorded four songs from the debut, and while Ocasek could've done the Billy Idol shuffle—dumb down the guitars, silly up the vocals, make the beat go boom!—he simply decided to ask the musical question: Can you jokers actually play the role? Perhaps surprising even their girlfriends, the boys nailed their lines. Malin, who could've been the Dion of the punk revival if he hadn't been blessed with the voice of Vito and the Salutations, unclenches his fists and connects. And the band's mythos—



challenged street-theater urchins struggling to "make it" in B-movie terms—finally sounds more compelling than corny. Despite their birthright of cynicism, D Generation defiantly believe in rock'n'roll's burlesque. They just wanna wrap the dirty city up in (less than) three tumultuous minutes and stuff it in your back pocket. CHARLES AARON

**6 WEEN**  
**12 Golden Country Greats**  
 Elektra

Just about any half-drunk garage band will give the ol' two-step a try just for yucks. But leave it to Ween, a band that's turned the chortling genrefuck into an art form, to make it their first concept album. Yep, those darned Ween boys have gone country.

The animus is probably the same that spawned John Trubee's classic single, "A Blind Man's Penis"—the joy of hearing a Hank Williams-ish crooner sing lyrics like "Vomit on me baby / Yeah-yeah-yeah." But while Trubee got his gag lyrics recorded by answering a send-your-lyrics-to-Nashville ad, brothers Gene and Dean went to Tennessee and hired 12 bona fide country session musicians. As Dean notes in the bio, the fifth Ween record actually has three guys named "Buddy" playing on it.

This anti-DIY methodology makes sense, since Dean and Gene afford country about the same respect they do Philly soul, British prog-rock, '70s bubblegum, and mariachi balladdeering, which is to say shitloads. The problem is that while *12 Golden Country Greats* approaches these dustbowl laments and bluegrass breakdowns with utter sincerity and hard-won expertise, the concept also flattens the Ween aesthetic, trading murky lo-fi wonder for authenticity and forgoing the sweeping panorama of styles and attitudes that made *Chocolate and Cheese* such a hoot.

True to form, though, Ween manage to offend just about everyone with their catalog of sociological put-downs and done-me-wrong misogyny. Which is, in a weird way, their saving grace. Offensive as, say, the homophobic overtones of "Mister Richard Smoker" are, the sprightly Western-swing number is—I can't help it—hilarious, dissing a nightclub predator with lines like "Cigarettes and coffee breath / Little boys

on crystal meth." What makes *12 Golden Country Greats* a decent Ween record is its transposition of real country into the world of post-indie-rock smart-asses—listen to Gene's deadpan croon as he pines: "I'm trippin', with'in', and squealin' / Pukin', lookin' for someone like you." Is Ween, like Beck, drafting a new pomo folk music for our times? Don't hold your breath. CHRIS NORRIS

**8 DR. OCTAGON**  
**Dr. Octagon**  
 Bulb

I should have seen it coming: On Ultramagnetic MCs' *The Four Horsemen*, Kool Keith kept screaming "Enter your spaceship!" like he was waiting for E.T. to bring back his groceries. On "Earth People," Keith (now using the nom de mike Dr. Octagon) says, "Earth people, I was born on Jupiter" about eight million times. Instead of selling his past glory (De La Soul took care of that years ago by recording a "sequel" to Ultra's early-'80s classic "Ego Trip-pin"), he's changed his name and gone deeper in the shadows.

Like fellow organic avant-garde visionaries Lee "Scratch" Perry and George Clinton, Dr. Octagon hawks a benevolent blend of space travel, protology, sex, and Hieronymus Bosch on the microphone: "Doo-doo in your outer ear / Two cows, a zebra jump through your atmosphere / Attack the stomach with juice they call gastric / Alien bugs with sickle cell get they ass kicked." Not exactly "This is how we do it."

Keith has crossed the country to hook up with a young Cali band, including a Japanese beatmaker named Automator and a Filipino DJ named Q-Bert. Automator's production on "Blue Flowers," the album's masterpiece, trumps anything by his Mo' Wax contemporaries (save DJ Shadow): a screechy violin and bass loop steer a queasy, melted klezmer ride through funkiness. Meanwhile, Q-Bert's turntable slashes almost steal the show on "Bear Witness," a DJ showcase cut, he struts more text than an indicted Senator.

Kool Keith and Ultra were the first rappers to be both hard and weird, popping nonsensical shit because it sounded good. Dr. Octagon is a welcome return to the irrational, destabilized essence and no-rules vibe of early hip-hop. (Bulb, 2440 16th St., Suite 316, San Francisco, CA 94103) SASHA FRERE-JONES

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The secret rock origin of techno and its offshoots is arguably Dick Dale, the King of the Surf Guitar, motoring through a run on his reverbed Fender—tongue twirls homey as a beach party and futuristic as the space imagery banded by surf groups from the Astronauts in 1963 to Man...or Astro-Man? today. Rhino's *Cowabunga! The Surf Box* captures a genre that always put instrumental oomph ahead of words, using new technology (guitars sustained like organs, freaked up with whammy bars) and youthful slobber (the Surfaris were Silverchair's age circa "Wipe Out") to create a dream world decorated in lounge, spaghetti Western, and other ethereals.

But the forward-leaning essence of surf now resides elsewhere. *Rave Anthems* (Sm:)e compiles the nonstop rapture of turn-of-the-'90s techno, when computerized keyboards stole the sleek primacy the electric guitar had stolen from the sax. *L.T.J. Bukem Presents Logical Progression* (Looking Good/London import) is the most

rhythmically rich drum'n'bass compilation I've heard, whirl-whizz shimmer that's less reggae than other jungle, an uncult slice of British trendiness. Whereas *Hardhop & Trypno* (Moonshine) is a proudly unclassifiable collision of oink noise and tough beats; hip-hop performed by demonic whoopee cushions. The first song even hooks around the rubber-band



cousin of a surf-guitar lick.

Nineties rock has touted as never before music that's either purely instrumental or relegates vocals to background wash. Island's *Quango* label is the trend's *Utne Reader*. Its compilations—I'll rank them by preference—have explored jazz global hip-hop (*Abstract Vibes*), showcased the breezier postpunk Industrialists who first touted exotica (*Atomic Audio*), contrasted

Arabic, Latin, and related operatic-ecstatic pop spheres (*Quango World Voices*), explored New Age global hip-hop (two *Journey Into Ambient* Groove volumes), compiled a British label specializing in the same (*A Taste of Pork*), resurrected mainstream dub like Sly and Robbie (*Dubmission*), set rat singers to Eurodisco (*Going Global Series*), reduced house to synopated quiet storm (*Future Soul*), and found mellow fellows to Sergio Mendes (*Islandoutpost*). Expertly selected but presented without liner info, these anthologies are the ultimate in hip passivity.

Veteran artists navigating similar waters require a stylistic anchor. For *Loop Guru*, whose samples range from PIL to pygmies to Arvo Pärt, it's a salutary willingness to mangle music from all three Worlds; too bad the tribal drumming on *Amrita* (World Domination) evokes a men's-movement enclave. Experts at assimilating new electronic trends, *Orbital* construct simple, arching keyboard melodies that survive any change in synth and rhythmic texture. In *Sides* (frr) may be the fall-asleep-to-it record of the year (a compliment). On *Mistaken Identity* (Epic), *Vernon Reid*, who seemed to pander in *Living Colour*, gets

down to pre-post-rock basics—the blues fluency of his electric guitar—and vamps with jazzmen, rappers, and sound bites over hip-hop, happily swinging up everything producers Teo Macero and Prince Paul toss him.

When self-definition fails, pretentiousness is the Siren's song of instrumentalism. *DJ Spooky's* promo-Afro-Futurist *Songs of a Dead Dreamer* (Asphodel) is odd, derivatively symphonic, though the punkishly minimalist repetitions create suspense. Chicagoans David Grubbs and Jim O'Rourke's collaboration *Gastr del Sol* is more rigorous. *Upgrade & Afterlife* (Drag City) offers a drone heaven where orchestras tune up, pianos duet with radiator hises, and a John Fahey acoustic arrives with violin courtesy of VU associate Tony Conrad. Both O'Rourke and Spooky appear on a revelatory horror, *In Memoriam Gilles Deleuze* (Mille Plateaux import), one of two multi-artist tributes to, yup, the self-offed French philosopher. It's all blips, blobs, cut-ups, and squelches—Industrial Culture reds masquerading as the future of the funk.

I miss Surf City. ERIC WEISBARD *Call Throb*, (212) 533-2328, for hard-to-find releases.

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## SINGLES

by Charles Aaron

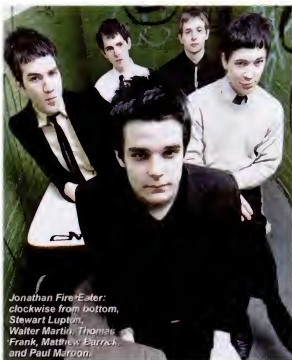
**O**lder fans who might foolishly venture out to Sex Pistols' reunion shows, John "Johnny Rotten" Lydon recently cracked: "I hope it rains and you get your wheelchairs stuck in the mud." In other words, he's banking on a whole new generation of fans who think punk rock is an abrasive Mountain Dew commercial or something.

**PANCHO KRYZTAL**, "Black Girl" (Scratchief Roadrunner) Tributes to "African queens," etc., are usually charmless and petronizing, but Pancho (from Chicago's northside Jamaican "hood") elevates the genre, mixing sublimely sweet R&B harmonies with a commanding, DJ-next-door chat style. The nimble dancehall production, courtesy of Sir Raf Allen (Shaggy), ricochets amongst 16(!) different drum tracks and, sneakily, no bass. The first single from the sprightly *Jam Down Vibrations* compilation, assembled by riddim archivist Jeremy "Scratchief" Freeman.

**QUAD CITY D.J.'s**, "C'Mon 'N Ride It (The Train)" (Big Beat/Atlantic) Butt-funk visionaries C.C.

Lemonhead and Jay Ski (95-South's "Whoot! There It Is," 69 Boyz's "Tootsee Roll") are back with an even more ingeniously sampled, soulfully swinging take on Miami Bass. The arrangement—almost an Afro-Cuban jazz bugout—is, deresay, sophisticated. Appropriate for dancers of all persuasions, even if you're not a double-jointed porno actress.

**VERUCA SALT**, *Blow It Out Your Ass It's Veruca Salt EP* (DGC) At this point, rock fuddy-duddies will probably never get off Veruca Salt's supposedly privileged stick, but as John Lydon once said of his detractors, "Tough titty"; or as singer/guitarist Louise Post says on this EP's from-a-scream-to-a-whisper, guitar-grinding ditty "I'm Taking Europe With Me": "Blite your tongue, you fucking bastard." These four songs, two each by Post and singer/guitarist Nina Gordon, kick, squirm, bum out, perk up, and get tasty in your face with some tasty feedback.



Jonathan Fire Eater:  
 clockwise from bottom,  
 Stewart Lupton,  
 Walter Martin, Thomas  
 Frank, Matthew Eyrich,  
 and Paul Maroon.

**FUGEES**, "Killing Me Softly" (Ruffhouse/Columbia) What's rarely mentioned is that the Fugees escaped the "alternative rap" lockdown by looking backward, not forward—i.e., digging deep in the reggae crates for hip-hop's roots. And while their pop breakthrough, like so many, is an R&B cover, that's where the routine ends. Lauryn Hill's reimagining of the lyrics (from Roberta Flack's 1973 hit) as a sound-boy swoon is deeply inspired—the word "killing" takes on even more resonance—and her voice drips melted butter from the speakers.

**JONATHAN FIRE-EATER**, *Tremble Under Boom Lights EP* (The Medicine Label) Sailing forth like most excellent private-school boys on drugs (lead singer Stewart Lupton recently visited rehab) or a soavé-bolla Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, New York City's resident cute-band-alert gets by on miles and miles of style. This five-song EP skimps on melodies in favor of Walter Martin's wonderfully loopy organ and Lupton's winsome, Mark E. Smith wordsmith. But "Give Me Daughters" is a truly eccentric toe-tapper for everybody who's so over Pavement.

Produced by alt-rock gun-for-hire Steve Albini (Bush, Pixies) with his customary stiff-necked rigor, crisp drum sound, and acid "wit."

**VOLEBEATS**, *Bittersweet EP* (Third Gear) The only upside to the so-called "alternative country" movement is that a few gifted long-sufferers like Lucinda Williams and Dave Alvin might actually get some decent gigs for a change. Otherwise, it's just a glorified beer-bust for well-connected '80s-indie types (Wilco, Son Volt, Golden Smog) experiencing rock-dude menopause. Unfortunately, Detroit's unconnected Volebeats have been overlooked in the hubbub. The five originals here, by four different band members, slip up on you, working the fine line between yearning and woe. And their version of Barry White's "I'm Gonna Love You Just a Little More Baby" gives the famous 1973 seduction an unexpectedly mournful, '90s wail. The Godfather of Love would love their style.

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# PRINTED MATTER

by Richard Gehr

## The Buddha of Suburbia

### Holy Land: A Suburban Memoir

By D.J. Waldie  
W.W. Norton

D.J. WALDIE is the public-information officer of Lakewood, a large Southern California suburb on the periphery of Long Beach. Waldie lives alone in the house he grew up in, one of 17,500 homes erected by developers in the early 1950s. In this short, sad book, Waldie takes a redemptive stab at describing how the place he lives came to be.

When people have too much chaos in their lives, they want order; and when too much order, chaos. 'Twas ever thus. Here in America, order got a big mid-century push when postwar housing demands set the stage for "planned communities" that usurped the farmlands that used to surround metropolises. These predictable and pristine suburbs offered a safety zone. Families could be shielded both from nature as well as from cities populated increasingly by such undesirables as blacks, browns, and

Jews. Suburbs were intended to give people faith in the constancy of life. Nevertheless, you get the impression that there is a hole at the bottom of the bucket of faith with which the Catholic author slips. "Daily life here has an inertia that people believe in," he writes.

Actually, there was always something a little too pure about suburbia. "Seen from above," writes Waldie of some famous aerial views of Lakewood's construction, "the grid is beautiful and terrible." But as anyone who grew up in a suburb knows, this grid disguises some weird and wonderful secrets. John Updike chronicled an adulterous suburban bacchanal in his best books. More recently, the suburban jungle of *Calvin and Hobbes* and the esoteric myths of Vertigo's *Books of Magic* comic portray 'burbs bubbling with mystery and excitement, pagan places hidden beneath the veil of order. What could possibly be more archaic than a barbecue, after all?

Waldie's community teeters on the brink of chaos. It requires constant vigilance against nature's untamed intentions. "It is unlawful to tell the future in my city," he writes. Astrology, palmistry, and clairvoyance are all taboo. The token tree planted in each front yard buckles the sidewalk, while its foliage hides the mall's big corporate logo. The city's flood-prevention system makes the streets overflow with water whenever it rains. Violence and death seem oddly squelched, too. When Waldie is mugged, he collapses backward onto a neighbor's lawn, unharmed. And how the hell do you keep the dogs from barking?

Waldie elegantly links all the little larcenies that add up to civilization as we know it. Much of *Holy Land* considers race, including the irony of "covenants" that would have barred the development's three Jewish

builders from residing there. Lakewood itself was the product of a scam involving Federal Housing Administration loans and hundreds of dummy corporations. And the purpose of Lakewood, in a sense, was to deliver residents to businesses, much as magazines are used to deliver readers to advertisers. A subdivision's population density determines its "yield," and "density," Waldie whispers, "is what developers sell to the builders of shopping centers."

Consisting of 316 essays ranging in size from a single line to most of a page, *Holy Land* plunges from its aerial view into the earth itself. It offers a cutaway view of the water table, recounting the *Chinatown*-style political hijinks that get water out of the ground and into the toilet bowls of Southern California. Some sections function like a historical lens, zooming outward from the author's 50-by-100-foot lot to the land's original dispensation by the King of Spain. The Lakewood grid is linked to that of Los Angeles, itself sprung from a model for all Spanish colonial settlements. "That grid," adds Waldie, "came from God."

Waldie's narrative voice drifts back and forth between the first and third persons. He employs the latter when alluding to the profound effect his father's death—resulting from a heart attack in the family bathroom—had on him. He mentions a Girl Who Got Away (who is now his tenant). He walks to work and back, a lonely pedestrian in a world of cars. And he draws a certain amount of solace from his faith, but probably not enough. He is, after all, a man convinced that "each of us is crucified"; and that "his own crucifixion is the humiliation of living the life he has made for himself." The suburban grid is his cross to bear, and they are mean streets indeed. e



### Red Light: Inside the Sex Industry

Text by James Ridgeway  
Photographs by Sylvia Plachy  
Pantheon Books

A thinking person's romp through the diverse incarnations of the sex industry in New York and environs, featuring gritty insider photos and intimate interviews with well-selected

and articulate sex workers, from porn stars to dominatrices to downscale strippers and street prostitutes, relating the daily reality of their jobs in stark, minute, and inevitably moving detail. It is these unknown and often unimaginable details of the inner workings of blood-sports and water-sports scenes at S&M dungeons, of do-it-yourself porn shoots and BBS cybertransgressions, among many other enterprises, that make *Red Light* a fun and candidly informative read.

EURYDICE

### M31: A Family Romance

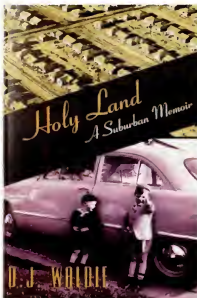
By Stephen Wright,  
Delia Trade Paperbacks

Stephen Wright has a thing for America's darker impulses. His breakthrough, 1993's *Going Native*

was a determinedly grim take on a sexually obsessed with violence and pop culture. While his earlier work can be just as bleak, Wright's vision is more comically bizarre. *M31* (1988), now back in print, concerns a world-

wide, dysfunctional family headed up by Dot and Dash, a husband-and-wife team of UFO fanatics who claim to be the descendants of aliens from the galaxy M31. As their family heads toward full psychic meltdown, Wright expertly details the mundane and absurd in their lives, end in the process gives a mad, metaphorical portrait of what it means to "make your own reality" in late-20th-century America.

L.C. SMITH



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# MOVIES

by Michael Atkinson

## Choose Hype

### Trainspotting

Directed by Danny Boyle  
Miramax

### Stealing Beauty

Directed by Bernardo Bertolucci  
Fox Searchlight

"CHOOSE LIFE? WHY would I want to do a thing like that?" So goes the prickly, super-ironic anthem of novelist Irvine Welsh's Scottish junkie saga *Trainspotting*, which in three short years has seen the center of the pop-culture cyclone first as an international bestseller, then as a smash London play, and now as a hyperventilating movie by director Danny Boyle. Indeed, Boyle's movie vaults its hip pedigree in every nervous frame, and accordingly disembarks onto Stateside soil waving huge flags of hype—no British movie in memory has labored under such an acclamatory load. Hype is like fiber: Though it may seem you can never get enough, too much of it will make your colon fall out.

It would be a shame if *Trainspotting* was beset by backlash, because while it doesn't live up to its heralds, it shudders with energy and conviction. As in his first film, *Shallow Grave*, Boyle's up-your-nose style of filmmaking is a ghoulish hoot; he shoots scenes from the

insides of hypodermics and toilet bowls, and his camera angles and sharp edits are free-standing jokes. And that's where the film leaves all drug movies save *Drugstore Cowboy* far behind: It's a shitty,

grossest riot, capturing the sardonic interior universe of Welsh's Edinburgh junkies while remaining true to its harrowing place and time.

Unlike the novel, which is a storm of wicked interior monologues, Boyle's movie concentrates on Mark, the sensitive straight man amid a pack of idiot losers, unscrupulous boy-toys, and psycho bar-brawlers, nearly all of whom climb aboard or jump off the smack wagon at a moment's notice. As Mark, the sharp-eyed Ewan McGregor (the black heart and soul of *Shallow Grave*) leads us through this self-made hell with a wry Celtic smirk, whether he's jonesin' for a fix, going all *Lost Weekend* while battling withdrawal, or preaching in the wilderness about how Scottish identity is a load of crap. The story, such as it is, whips from euphoric hit to doomed episode in a *No Exit*, no-future whorl, the "Choose Life" dictum forever hanging over Mark's head like an indecipherable Zen koan.

Boyle and Welsh aren't interested



Young Scots on junk: From left, Jonny Lee Miller, Ewan McGregor, Kevin McKidd, and Ewen Bremner are the good-for-naughts of *Trainspotting*.

In their gang of smackheads as addictive personalities—which they definitely are—but as the trickle-down refuse of social malaise. (As the film makes clear, Scots have more reason to dope up than American college kids.) Unfortunately, the dynamic of junkie movies is a little like that of pornography—all the mainlining, glazed stupors, and drooling can't help but be several steps less fascinating than getting high yourself.

*Trainspotting* tries to overcome the tedium of scag with *Clockwork Orange*-borrowed visual hyperbole, hell-bent soundtrack throb (from the likes of Pulp, Elastica, and Iggy Pop), and pratfalls, but there's a nagging sense that Boyle & Co. have gone a long way to evade the authentic costs of junkiehood. Even the funeral of an AIDS victim is a cease for bad-mannered wit. If I preferred *Drugstore Cowboy*'s lark, almost lazy rhythms, it might be because Gus Van Sant wasn't set on cracking me up come hell or high water.

A quite different portrait of a demimonde about to implode, Bernardo Bertolucci's *Stealing Beauty* could have used a dose of Boyle's balls-to-the-wall sensibility, as well as the narrative imperative of a narcotic habit. A sunstruck visit with artistic expatriates in Tuscany (magically photographed by king of darkness Darius Khondji), Bertolucci's movie yearns for a relevant story to tell just as Liv Tyler's virginal American maiden yearns for deflowering. Novelist Susan Minot wrote the script, and so Bertolucci's florid, rather sophomoric notions of decadent eroticism end parabohemian

lifestyles are delivered in elliptical, inconclusive fiction-workshop parcels.

Beware of middle-age filmmakers erecting testaments to the magic and glory of cherry-popping: Every character, from terminally ill patient Jeremy Irons, grumpy sculptor Donal McCann, advice columnist Stefania Sandrelli, and slug lawyer D.W. Moffett to a score of randy young Tuscan hunks, are "intoxicated" by Tyler's budding sexuality. Tyler is also searching for the identity of her biological father (a wasted cue for an Aerosmith cameo), but the quest is incidental to the scenery and sex banter. Also riding a crest of Euro-hype, *Stealing Beauty* asks only one important question: Why has Bertolucci, once one of the world's greatest filmmakers, become satisfied with being a dirty old man? •

### COMING ATTRACTIONS

Resurrected by Miramax at its most Tarantino-indulgent, Jack Hill's *Switchblade Sisters* (1975) is far from being merely a '70s drive-in fossil—this campy girl-gang *Götterdämmerung* snowballs from hamburger-stand knife-fight to full-fledged class war, waged by "Little Red Book"-reading militant black feminists with Tommy guns. Dripping with accidental Godardisms, the movie has a mythic bluntness to it that suggests its absurd juvenile-delinquent power struggles are of universal, even cosmic, import—it could be a parable on the Fall of Troy. See it to believe it.





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### IT'S ALIVE!

*continued from page 52*

these many years, working rock's back roads and state fairs. And they're stoked that Kiss are getting together again because it validates their devotion—they've been clamoring for a reunion tour for years, and finally their prayers have been answered.

"Every day, at every Kiss convention, that was the first question they were always asked: 'When are you gonna get back together?'" says Magalongo. "They wanted to give it to us. I think they really want to do it."

John Stockwell has a prediction. "They will do this for two or three years and that'll be it. Because they will be eligible for the Rock and Rock Hall of Fame in 1999. And there will be no better way than to go out on top." The rest of the room nods in agreement. They hold out hope that when Kiss get to the top, they're bringing all their friends with them.

Psychiatrists call it the primal scene: the tremulous emotional upheaval of a child watching his parents make love. I have never observed this fateful scene, but I've seen something equally wrenching. I have seen the members of Kiss in flagrante delicto—i.e., without their makeup—one April evening, bowling.

It's lead guitarist Ace Frehley's birthday. And as part of Gene and Paul's ongoing efforts to make Ace and Peter feel part of the family again, a surprise party is being thrown.

The potential for hard feelings is still there. The four are diplomatic around each other, and make a show of their mutual attentiveness. They've hammered out a contract that, they hope, leaves nothing to argue over.

"The rules of this game are very simple," Simmons explains a few days later. "To get back into Kiss you have to do what we say." We is Stanley and Simmons. One rumor has us reaping 80 percent of tour profits to Criss and Frehley's 20 percent, but we don't like to talk about money. "There are four members in the band, and everybody's in the same car," explains Simmons. "But just by design, two guys have to be in front and two guys in the back."

He bows a frame, then starts working this Studio City room. Simmons's friends in Helmet are here, and the band's guitarist, Page Hamilton, corners him, begging him to let Helmet take the tour-opening slot Stone Temple Pilots have jeopardized. "We really want to go on tour with you," Hamilton exclaims. "Fuck punk rock! Fuck punk rock!"

Simmons is noncommittal. As he takes his turn again, I make the startling discovery that in order to grip a bowling ball, one must make the Satanic sign of the beast, pinkie and index fingers extended. Kiss were once picketed by Christian fundamentalists who spread a rumor that the name stood for Knights In Satan's Service. Today another rumor is born: that Gene Simmons sold his soul to master the 7–10 split.

It's clear from the way the pins cringe in submission why they call Simmons the God of Thunder. And Stanley, too, shows a steady hand as he mows down frame after frame. Meanwhile,

Frehley sits a little bit apart, looking lost, smiling sheepishly. He's always been the moodiest, most down-to-earth person in the band, never as comfortable in the spotlight as the two guys in the front seat. When it's his turn to bowl, Frehley slumps up to the line and huris the ball sideways with two hands. It's not worth a deuce.

Frehley grew up in the Bronx, his childhood more violent in the telling than Stanley's and Simmons's. He was a member of the Ducky Boys street gang. If you saw *A Bronx Tale*, you saw his high school, where race rumbles were common.

"Half of my friends are dead now or OD'd," says Frehley. "My best friend hung himself at Rikers Island. It was a rocky road—but music got me away from those people."

In the wild world of Kiss, Frehley had earned a reputation as the wildest. He came back to a hotel room in France once with a model and a bottle of champagne, and passed out still in makeup; when he came to, his eyes were swollen shut, a reaction to the silver in the cosmetics. Inquire about the time he wrecked his car, and he'll ask you to be more specific. Which head trauma? Was that the DeLorean?

"In my 20s, I didn't think I was gonna live to be 30," Frehley says a few days after his birthday. "I was surprised I hit 40—and now I've hit 45, which is mind-boggling."

Frehley was the only Kiss member to score a hit from the 1978 solo albums, the punchy "New York Groove." Emboldened by success, not getting as much attention as Simmons and Stanley, Frehley left the band in 1983. He toured with his own outfit, Frehley's Comet. You might as well have called them "Kohoutek" for all the people who saw them.

"There were some hard feelings when I left. I had some substance-abuse problems at that point in my life. I wasn't thinking straight. I was getting very suicidal, frustrated, the syndrome of too much too soon. The success of my solo album...that kind of planted the seed: 'Hey, maybe I can do it on my own.'"

It took Frehley a long while to realize that in the time it took him to sleep off last night's bender, Simmons and Stanley would have lived a half-dozen interviews. "I'll be honest with you," he says softly, like someone just getting over an operation. "Once I left, it was a lot more of a rocky road than I thought it was gonna be. I didn't realize how much I depended on Paul and Gene and Peter."

A few days later, drummer Peter Criss tells a similar story. It was the gang life that provided him with girls and fine clothes and respect, and he might have stayed with it except for the violence. The irony for him and Frehley, of course, is that they found everything in Kiss that they'd experienced in gangs—including, ultimately, the self-destruction.

Tired of getting beat up in his Brooklyn neighborhood, Criss joined the Phantom Lords. He'd make zip guns from car antennas and cap pistols and sell them for \$5 a pop, until his grandmother caught him and broke a broomstick over his head.

Criss worked his way up in the gang and became war counsel, the man responsible for deciding which weapons would be used at the

rumble. He liked the life, but then some guy came after him with a meat cleaver.

Being the oldest person in Kiss posed its own problems: Criss had been in more bands than the others, and came to feel, like Frehley, that Stanley and Simmons were bogarting the attention. That was especially true after "Beth," which Criss sang and cowrote, became Kiss's biggest hit in 1976.

He drank hard, threw tantrums. Maybe one wasted night in Tokyo can stand in for all the others. Criss had locked his hotel room door, stripped naked, and left a trail of clothes leading up to an open window. When the band broke down the door, they feared the worst until his giggles from under the bed gave him away.

Criss would be the first to tell you life hasn't always been easy since Kiss. His marriage fell apart, he lost a 20-room home, his own records tanked. About the only time his name surfaced after he was fired was in the mid-'80s, when a homeless man claiming to be Criss fooled a number of reporters and celebrities. The real Criss went on *Donahue* to get his name back—and was ambushed by a woman in the audience who alleged that she had an affair with him while his wife was having a baby.

Right now, the real Criss is in full costume, eating salad while a photographer sets up. Speaking in a thick Brooklynese, the 48-year-old Criss could play a goombah in a Scorsese movie, if Scorsese ever filmed *Cats*. He seems almost embarrassingly glad to be back in the band. "I never felt happier in my life. I wish I would have felt this way when I was younger," he says. "You think it's gonna go on forever, and then you lose it again. Nobody's gonna take it away from me now."

Now that he's got the cat's superpowers back, it's clear how much they mean to him. "I'm really cute," he begins. "There's a cuteness, but then there's a power, like don't fuck with me. You fuck me and I'll kill ya." Suddenly, the war counsel is in the room, painted and ready for battle.

"The other Peter—he's not here now. This is a stronger character. And the other three guys have to be with me; they are my other powers. I could be as strong without the others around."

Long gone are the days when the record company had a bottle of champagne, an eighth of coke, and a bag of Quaaludes waiting in his hotel room. But if the '70s has taken a physical toll, you wouldn't know it when Criss is in makeup. When he's in character, he doesn't quite recognize himself.

"Look at this face," he laughs. "That's a gift from God. I didn't come up with this face. I often ask myself, 'Where did that come from?' I could have been a fox, or a bear, or—but this is me! For some reason I feel so comfortable in this."

He looks comfortable too, like he's ready to lick up some milk. "I'm serious about it. It's not just a gimmick. Fuck you, gimmick!" He sounds ready to put my head in a vise.

"This is a reality, this is what it is, this is what we are. And I know that more now than I've ever known it. No gimmick. This is Kiss, and it's a wonderful thing, man." ■

## DEAD ROCK WEST

*continued from page 66*

I say, "What do you think of the Hard Rock Casino?"

"I like it," Thompson mumbles.

"Honestly? Why?"

"Because it answers to the private needs of the individual. It's tasteful and clean. It offers the kind of variety that people like me need."

I can't believe what I'm hearing, and say, "I can't believe what I'm hearing."

"You just called for an argument," Thompson says.

"No!" I protest. "I called for a consensus! I think it's a heartless place. I don't think it has anything to do with Vegas or rock'n'roll. I like it better here at the dirty old Horseshoe Casino."

"Well, girle, when you get to be my age, you'll understand the wisdom of what I'm saying."

I tell Thompson I am concerned about the sanitizing of America. Disney has recently moved to Times Square, and is building a family haven there, of all places. And now Vegas is becoming a second Orlando. What is happening to the dark, unsavory neighborhoods of this nation? Where will people go for vice?

"Girle," Thompson says kindly. "You can't live like that forever. You can't be that flagrant and decadent 24 hours a day, the way Vegas used to be. Bugsy Siegel is dead. You have to clean up eventually. And the Hard Rock is clean."

I ask Thompson one more thing. "But, Hunter?" I say. "Don't you miss it? Don't you miss all the dirty stuff?"

After a long moment, he answers in an amused and wistful tone. "Oh, yeah. Absolutely."

Back at the Hard Rock Casino, it's now four in the morning. People are still gambling. There is a faint whiff of screwdriver-scented vomit by the elevator doors. I talk to a young security guard, and he says, "I don't know anything about how Las Vegas used to be, but I like it better now. I understand that it used to be a real dump. Apparently, it was really sleazy."

He is standing in front of the Kurt Cobain display case. Inside is a guitar, a jacket, and some photographs. The Kurt Cobain display case is equipped with two long slits in the glass, so fans can slide messages inside. The display is therefore littered with poems to Cobain, sketches of Cobain, letters for Cobain, etc. It's become a shrine. But some clever local entrepreneurs also slide their business cards inside. On this particular night, the shrine is advertising a divorce lawyer, a tattooist, a florist, and a taxi service.

Cobain's display case is the only one I see in the Hard Rock Casino that is not sealed. I can't help wondering whether the slits were a corporate decision, whether someone specifically designed this case to collect these fans' messages, to add some pathos. This strikes me as exploitative. So I write, on a piece of notebook paper, "This is exploitative." I slide the paper through one of the slits.

By the next morning, my message is gone. The business cards, however, remain. ■



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PLAN YOUR ESCAPE THIS AUGUST

## LIFE AFTER DEATH

*continued from page 84*

running to the market and being horrified by the carnage. Even despite all she'd seen, this rattled her to the core. She became emotional and began to shake as she told me, her voice rising like a frightened child's, and for the first time I realized how young she really was. "It was terrible, all the blood and the screaming. The screaming was the worst. It couldn't stop," she said, staring down at the hole. Like everyone else who rushed to the market, she helped get the wounded treatment. Others took away the dead.

At the time, there was the suggestion, never completely dispelled, that the Bosnians had bombed their own market, but blamed the Serbs, to ignite such international outrage as to force NATO's intervention. The Serbs denied they bombed the market. At any rate, two days later, NATO attacked, bombing Serb artillery and communications positions, and their tanks and

bridges. They bombed relentlessly for three days. In almost Biblical fashion, the heavens opened up and retribution rained on the persecutors.

From the market I went, alone, to meet Denis, a Croatian who had defended Sarajevo. He was 17 and in high school before the war. He had a chance to go to a musical academy but the war derailed that. In April '92, right at the outset of the siege, he volunteered for the Bosnian army.

Because he was young, his commanders positioned him in the hills as a sniper, away from the front lines. The first time he killed a Serb soldier he threw up. He said by the fourth time he killed, he liked it.

He is now 21, sitting opposite me in the narrow coffee bar, drinking a Coke. He is soft-spoken, but his voice, which is actually sweet and young while he talks, has a hard aftersound, a cold edge. His face is high-cheeked and his forehead is high and flat. Long, shiny black hair falls away to either side of his face. He has a wide nose and his eyes are wide but black. They are probably dark brown, really, of course, but they look black, piercing but impenetrable, like onyx.

He had to kill soldiers in his own platoon. "This war is built on national hate, and in the beginning I had to kill the people who had aggression on my people, my town. Later on there were people who did not like me because I was not Muslim. In my squad, the people who are always with me, they love me, they respect me, like soldier. And they have nothing against my religion. But people from other units, they have something against that. When he pulled the gun, I must pull mine."

I asked him how his experiences have changed him.

"I look how I was before—it not change me a bit," he said. He feels that the people he fought and killed were not "his people," they didn't care about or accept him. He doesn't forgive his enemies. "I will never forgive, because I lost too many friends. In eight months, I lost ten people from my family. It's not a thing you can forget."

"I can tolerate them. I can pass time with some man, and I know he was a soldier, and he came from the Serb side of Sarajevo, and maybe he killed, I don't know, my uncle. If he don't talk to me, if he don't make contact with me, I will not react. But I cannot talk to them, I cannot be on the same level as them."

His girlfriend, Delia, who is sitting with us, says she won't forget the war, either. She's younger than Denis and hosts her own television show, a program for children. "One of my shows, we talk about wishes, and one girl, four or five years old, I ask her what is her wish, and she

said, 'My wish is that my father come back to me.' Her father is dead. That girl will never forget. Me too, I will never forget."

Denis got nightmares during the war, but not, he says, like the ones in books where you see the face of the man you've killed and your conscience haunts you. In Denis's nightmares, his commander was always coming to his window and screaming to him to get ready, that they were under attack.

"This is funny," he says, and smiles, and Delia lights up, too. "When NATO is bombing the Serbs positions around the city, I had a temperature, I was very

*Plenty of vacancies:  
Holiday Inn Sarajevo.*



temperature, I was very sick, lying in bed, and I heard 'blam, blam,' and I stood up looking for my rifle. 'Oh, shit, where is it!' And I tried to wake the person next to me, it's my sister, but I think it's my companion from the platoon, and I said, 'C'mon, c'mon, we're under attack.' And I go to the living room and my parents are standing by the window and they are watching the bombing."

He doesn't think Sarajevo has much future. And if it does, he won't be around anyway—he says he's going to go somewhere else and try to live his life normally. He wants to go to California, but even though he plays in a band now, he doesn't think he'll be able to work as a musician in America, because there are too many professional musicians. He doesn't believe the war changed his music, beyond giving it the benefit of his experience. "My music is not something the war can change," he says flatly.

I asked him what the best moment of his life was. "When I buy my first electric guitar,



just before the war. Then, when the war started, a grenade flew into my room and—there's no more guitar!" He smiled again. "The best moment of my life, and then the saddest moment of my life."

As we end the interview, Delia tells me she'd like to make a statement, but she's worried about her grammar. I told her not to worry about her grammar, and she said: "When I was little girl, there were all kinds of churches and mosques in Sarajevo, all religion, and they were in 100 meters together, and everybody was tolerant of everybody else. That is my souvenir of Sarajevo, that is what I want to see happen again."

In the taxi on the way to the ruins of the library, Suki told me a story about a Bosnian gangster who has risen to folk-hero status. "He was the first man in Sarajevo to pick up a weapon—it was old army gun but it worked—and say we must defend ourselves, and we must kill the Serbs who try to destroy Sarajevo. He was the first and then others join him. He killed so many Serbs. I tell you, everybody was loved this man, be'ef me."

He was an incredibly fierce and brutal fighter, who could and did kill with his bare hands. He tortured some of his victims and severed the head of one of them. "But then he changed sides," Suki continued, "and fought for the Serbs and killed Muslims on the front lines. The Serbs paid him more money. Everybody in Sarajevo was so disappointed." I asked her what happened to him.

"I don't know what happen'd to him."

The library was the pride of Sarajevo, and acknowledged as one of the great ones of Europe for its renowned collection of antique texts and priceless books. Scholars from all over the world visited. The Serb Nationalists targeted it deliberately, to eradicate the Muslim heritage while they attempted to eradicate their race.

Only the walls and the carved stone columns, worn smooth by the ages so that the once intricate fine figures have been blunted to their crude essential shapes, still stand. The steps outside have been rounded by impacted ice. The inside staircases, because the windows and roof are gone, are slopes of ice.

We were alone while we were there, which was strange, as if time was momentarily suspended. It was snowing and soft flakes fell silently and slowly, like the souls of all the destroyed words returning to the library. While Loren took pictures, I made my way up to the second floor, slipping and falling as I climbed the slope on all fours. When I made it to the balcony, I looked down at a heap of red bricks on the ground floor covered with a layer of snow like freezer burn. Underfoot was rubble. I picked up a small stone and took my glove off to feel it in my hand. It felt to me as if it had known life, as if even in its inanimateness it had possessed a consciousness of what it had been a part of. I thought about taking it as a souvenir, but that felt wrong, so I threw it down onto the pile of bricks, watching it hit, bounce, and then tumble into invisibility.

After lunch, we drove to Ilidza, a Serb-held suburb during the war. Like all the suburbs, it was being "reunited" and the Serb author-

ities were ceding control over to the Bosnian police as part of the Dayton peace agreement. The Serbs did not have to leave—in fact, they were being passionately entreated to stay—but they were, in droves, taking all their possessions they could carry away with them, sometimes just on their backs and in shopping bags. And they were burning the houses as they left so that returning Bosnians found only shells for what used to be their homes, one final indignity and loss in this unbearably cruel war. A European relief worker told me the departing Serbs were leaving new land mines behind (so perhaps there's even more indignity and loss to come), which no NATO personnel would

**There wasn't much left of Ilidza. The roads were twisted into ruptured paving and cords of mud, with giant puddles dully marking the biggest shell holes.**

confirm officially, but several acknowledged off the record.

The first suburb, Vogosca, to be headed back to Bosnian jurisdiction was done so the week we were there. Ilidza was one of the next scheduled. Our driver, a tall, square-shouldered Muslim named Sacak, fought in the Bosnian army, doubtless with great courage (there wasn't a lot of room in this war for people who didn't have great courage), but adamantly didn't want to drive us there. He offered to lend me his car instead, but told us he had to remove the license plates, because they would betray that the car belonged to a Muslim. I said that a car without plates might betray something not entirely on the up-and-up too, and that I didn't fancy having to explain to Serbian police whose car it was once we'd established it wasn't mine. Finally he relented—very bravely, far braver that I would've been in his position—to drive us to the edge of the suburb, and we could walk the rest of the way in. His fear was palpable as we approached, he jabbed me in the arm to point out a distant clump of burnt-out houses: In the war, Serb snipers had shot at passing traffic from them. When we were stopped at an IFOR checkpoint, he pulled over and refused to drive any further, even though the soldier told us it was safe to proceed, and that at any rate we couldn't stop here. Sacak drove forward 20 feet.

"He says the Chetniks will know he is a Muslim soldier and will kill him if he goes fur-

ther," Suki said to me, leaning forward over the front seat. Sacak was very frightened. We told him to wait for us at this spot and that we'd be back in an hour or two, and we got out and started to walk. We had only gone a hundred yards or so when an IFOR jeep picked us up and took us in.

Earlier that morning, I'd asked the *New York Times* reporter Stephen Kinzer what to be careful about in Ilidza. He said it was fairly safe, as long as you didn't wander off the roads—the fields were still mined. "You want to get out of there before dark, because that's when the snipers come out," he added, matter-of-factly.

There wasn't much left of Ilidza; it was mostly devastated. The roads were twisted into ruptured paving and cords of mud, with giant puddles dully marking the biggest shell holes. There was an open-air market, more specious than the one in Sarajevo, but with only a few stalls active, and they were all selling mostly the same thing—the same chocolate bars, boxes of crackers, detergent, scraggly vegetables, soda, beer, some plain clothes. The merchants looked older and their clothes dirtier and more ragged than their counterparts in Sarajevo. They looked sadder, too—but then they were about to become voluntary refugees, whether genuinely fearful of retribution or stubbornly refusing to co-exist with Bosnians.

We went into a café and could feel the tension toward us as physically as the sticky body heat and the low cloud of smoke. We sat ourselves, trying to project, if not exactly confidence, at least inoffensiveness. We asked for coffee, the waiter said we couldn't have coffee, the electricity was out. We took Cokes. Loren whispered we should go, that this was dangerous for Suki, but she said no, we should stay. It might cause trouble if we went now. I felt the same thing—I wanted everyone to get bored of hating us before we left, so that they wouldn't particularly notice or care. The café was crowded and we had found a few of the last seats in the back. Most of the people were young and they were having fun. They were smoking and jabbing the air and laughing, and drinking coffee that must have been made before the electricity went out.

Back outside, I stopped two men walking and, through Suki, asked if I could talk to them. The one who did all the talking was full of anger—the Muslims did this, he said, waving his arm. They started this. And now we must leave our homes, but where can we go? This is our home but if we stay the Muslims will kill us when NATO leaves. He had a 12-year-old son, he told me, and he no longer wanted anything for himself, just his boy. He didn't care for his own future, he just wanted his son to have a future. He pressed his finger into my chest. He didn't want any more war, but he would kill anyone who tried to harm his son. He wouldn't let Loren take a picture of him. As we finished, I told Suki to tell him thanks, and that I wished peace for him and his son. She translated this and his eyes watered and he took the hand I'd offered in both of his, and said in English, "Thank you."

We talked to several others who each



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explained the war from their perspective, that it was they who lost everything and were being forced to evacuate, that the U.N. and America didn't care about them. It was beginning to get dark. Suki negotiated with a taxi driver to take us back to the edge of Sarajevo, where Sack was waiting and took us back to our hotel.

Deniz Kamzic, the Holiday Inn's only bellman, is sitting on the bed opposite mine in my hotel room. He was at the spot where the war started in Sarajevo, in the crowd upon whom the first shots were fired.

"You remember I tell you, I live in center here, by this hotel. On sixth of April I go with my parents to front of building where was our ex-government, in front of this hotel, and we are standing with many people. We are protest. We didn't want the war, we wanted to live together. In one moment, the snipers started to shoot. They killed one girl on the bridge. It was sunny day. It was nice day. And we were so angry. We are seeing sniper shoot from this hotel, from Holiday Inn. People was crazy, and we broke in hotel. We throw rocks in window, and we go in hotel.

"I was in first group. We go first floor, and I heard automatic gun—oh, no, I don't want to go in there! Our special forces tell us, go down, don't go upstairs, the Chetniks will kill you. And we go down."

"Did they get the snipers?"  
"Yes. When I back on the street my mother's looking for me. 'Where are you?' I was 16 years old.

"A couple of days from that date started real war. It started from the hills, and some buildings in Grbavica and Serb territories. They have modern weapons. We didn't have good weapons, only some guns for hunting, pistols, and a couple of automatic weapons. And many young people, and my friends, are dying when this war started."

There was a deadly seriousness about him, blended with a contradictory exuberance. He frowned as he spoke, and sometimes smiled when he was finished. His eyes had a youthful light, but the

features of his face were already advanced ten years beyond where they should be.

Before the war, he, too, had been in school, and intended to go to the air force's military academy, which of course the war preempted. Since childhood it was his dream to fly. He joined the army in May '93, when he was 17. His parents begged him not to. For six months he trained, ironically, to fire anti-aircraft guns. Then he was sent to the front line, in the bowl of hills that once provided the idyllic backdrop for the Olympics.

He thought he'd die many times. The most scared he was was when his commander sent him to another

**I asked Deniz if he ever found the war exciting. "Yes, in the beginning. But after half a year I think, 'When this stop?' I want peace, but the peace isn't come."**

position on the front line, but the snow was falling so hard, he couldn't see more than two meters in front of him and got lost. He thought the Chetniks would find him, but the gods spared Deniz Kamzic and his own soldiers picked him up.

I asked him if he ever found the war exciting.

"Yes, in the beginning. [Makes sound of shrapnel exploding and bullets whistling past.] When war started, everything was interesting for me, you know, but after maybe half a year I think, 'When this stop?' I want peace, but the peace isn't come."

"Did you kill anybody?"

"No."

"Are you happy you didn't?"


"Well, yes—because once I see dead peoples at the front line, dead Chetniks. Our soldiers are bringing them in our base. I hadn't seen death before and I think, I don't blame him. Maybe he must come

[continued on page 123](#)

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## LIFE AFTER DEATH

continued from page 116

on Serb front line, and maybe not. Maybe the Serb government is call him and he must go to front line to fight to us. But if he is criminal, if he wants to kill, to rape, to burn houses, I would like to kill that man. That's normal. Then I think, this man has a mother and she is thinking, 'When will my son come home?' But he will not come home because he is dead."

He thinks it is likely that among the people he fought were some of his friends, boys he hung out with before the war, but he didn't see any. He recalled, sadly, a Serb friend who fought with him, defending Sarajevo, who was killed. When I asked him, if he coexisted with non-Muslims before the war, he replied: "Yes, of course, we live together and happy."

What about ethnic hatred? "A cause of people on top," he says with a frown. After four years, he still doesn't understand why it happened.

I ask if he can ever forget the war. "Well, yes I have a very hard question. But, yes, I have to, because I want to live together with some good people, who want to be civilized. And we young people are only hope for this country to live together. We must do something better, we must have some progress."

Viado had wanted us to come and hear him play at the pub again, and drink with him, as this was our

last night in Sarajevo. But we were hungry and we went to have dinner instead with Deniz, Suki, and a couple of NATO press officers, one of whom told us about an American soldier who'd been shot by a sniper and who awarded the Purple Heart. Apparently, at first, it was thought he'd been shot in the wrist, a serious wound; in fact he'd been shot in the wrist watch, and didn't have so much as a scratch on him. The original communique had been typed wrong. He still got the medal.

After dinner, we went to the pub and said goodbye to Viado. As an afterthought, I asked him what he had done before the war.


"I was a tour guide, at Medjugorje." A handful of my damaged brain cells from the night at the speak-easy spontaneously reconnected and I remembered he had said something then about seeing the Madonna.

"Yes, I did see her," he said. "It was Christmas day, 1990, around two o'clock. It was a nice sunny day. Me and several other tour guides were having lunch. A local guy was working outside his house, just across the road, and all of a sudden he stopped and was looking towards the Mountain of the Cross. He looked at me and said, 'Viadol Viadol What's there in the middle of the hill?' And I looked over there and it was like a projection, like a laser-beam projection, just like she is pictured, with her left hand higher, the right hand lower, holy, holy, looking holy." ■

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Page 40: 1 Polo jeans, \$48, at Hecht's, select stores; Bloomingdale's, select stores; Mercantile, select stores. 2 DKNY jeans, \$58, at Bullocks, nationwide; Macy's West, nationwide; Bloomingdale's, nationwide; Saks Fifth Avenue, nationwide. 3 Todd Oldham jeans, \$75, at Todd Oldham stores, New York, Los Angeles, and South Beach, Miami; Flashy Trash, Chicago; Neiman Marcus, nationwide. 4 Gap jeans, \$48, at Gap stores, nationwide. 5 Levi Strauss & Co. jeans, \$51, for store information call (800) USA-LEVI. 6 Daryl K denim, \$110, at Daryl K, New York; Fred Segal, Los Angeles; Barneys, nationwide. 7 Calvin Klein jeans, \$45, at Bloomingdale's, nationwide; Macy's, nationwide. 8 Guess jeans, \$58, at Macy's, nationwide; Burdines, nationwide; Bloomingdale's, nationwide. 9 Gianni Versace Couture jeans, \$150, at Versace Jeans Couture Boutiques, nationwide; Saks Fifth Avenue, nationwide; Neiman Marcus, nationwide. 10 American Eagle Outfitters denim, \$28, at American Eagle Outfitters stores, nationwide.

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## #3 "NYLON GYM SHORTS"

THE FIRST TIME I FELT BOOBS FOR A SUSTAINED PERIOD OF TIME, THEY WERE PRESSED AGAINST MY BACK IN A LINE FOR FRENCH FRIES AT A HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL GAME. I STOOD THERE IMAGINING THEM PRESSING INTO ME ALL QUASHED AND AWKWARD. I EVEN IMAGINED THE NIPPLE FOLDED OVER AND WRINKLED, FIGURED THAT I'D END UP WITH TWO CIRCULAR PERSPIRATION MARKS ON THE BACK OF MY TEE-SHIRT. UP UNTIL THAT TIME IT WAS ONE OF THE HIGH POINTS OF MY LIFE. FOR YEARS TO COME I'D SUMMON THIS MEMORY WHEN OTHER FORMS OF FANTASY WEREN'T DOING IT FOR ME. I THOUGHT "SURE THIS WAS A POPULAR FRENCH FRY STAND, THE MALT VINEGAR TYPE WITH THAT "CLASSY" ENGLISH FEEL TO IT, BUT WAS IT SO JAMMED THAT HER BOOBS WOULD BE ACCORDIANED AGAINST MY BONEY BACK OR DID SHE JUST WANT ME?" THESE WERE THE QUESTIONS I WRESTLED WITH IN THE MANY SLEEPLESS NIGHTS TO COME, NIGHTS THAT I'D WEAR NYLON GYM SHORTS TO BED INSTEAD OF CONSTRUCTIVE BRIEFS. THE NYLON GYM SHORTS NIGHTS WERE THE TYPE I'D TRY TO PRETEND NEVER HAPPENED, ESPECIALLY IF CHURCH WERE THE FOLLOWING DAY, CHRIST'S BODY ON THE CROSS, THE SWEATY PRIEST HE OUT OF TUNE SINGING, EVERYONE KNEW I WAS A ZITTY THIRTEEN YEAR OLD SINNER. I'D PRAY TO GOD TO GIVE ME STRENGTH TO NEVER AGAIN PUT ON THE NYLON GYM SHORTS, BUT NEVITABLY I'D FAIL. FORCES DEEP INSIDE OF ME DEMANDED IMMEDIATE ATTENTION AND ALTHOUGH I COULDN'T BARE TO ADMIT IT TO MYSELF I LOVED FALLING PREY TO IT. WEARING THE NYLON GYM SHORTS WAS A LIBERATION, I KNEW IT WAS WRONG BUT IT FELT SO RIGHT. THEY WERE ALWAYS COOL ON A HOT SUMMER NIGHT, SO LIGHT WEIGHT THAT ONE DIDN'T NEED TO IMAGINE HOW HARD TO FEEL COMPLETELY NAKED, BECAUSE FOR THE PUBESCENT, NAKEDNESS IS VULGAR WHEN YOU CAN WEAR GYM SHORTS. YES I WOULD PUT THEM ON AND MY HEART RATE WOULD QUICKEN, I JUST FELT SO MUCH MORE ALIVE. I'D BREAK THROUGH THE FEAR AND SHAME OF IT ALL AND MY MIND WAS FREE TO GO BACK TO THAT FATE FULG FRENCH FRY LINE. I REMEMBER WISHING IT'D NEVER END, THAT THE FRYULATOR GREASE WOULD SOMEHOW CONGEAL LOCKING THE HALF COOKED FRIES IN THE FAT FOREVER SO I COULD JUST FEEL HER MAGNIFICENT BREASTS ON MY BACK INTO ETERNITY. I CURSED MY NERVOUS SYSTEM FOR NOT BEING SENSITIVE ENOUGH TO DISTINGUISH HER NIPPLES. I COULD NOT DENY THE ALL ENCOMPASSING GLORY AND THRILL OF HAVING THOSE TWO LOAVES OF WONDERFULNESS PRESSED INTO ME FOR MOMENTS, PERHAPS EVEN MINUTES, AND IN MEMORY FOR YEARS TO COME. THE INEVITABLE HAPPENED, MY FRIES WERE SERVED, ROLLED IN A CONE OF NEWS PAPER, THE ACT OF REACHING FOR THEM SEPARATED HER GREASE OFF MY BACK, I CURSED THE COOL AIR RUSHING IN, 'CURSED FREEDOM I WANT YOU NOT!' I STOOD BACK FROM THE CROWD AND WATCHED MY ANGEL RELIEVE HER FRIES, WOULD SHE GLANCE AT ME AS SHE WALKED PAST OR WOULD I FOREVER BE A NAMELESS BACK IN THE CROWD AN IMPEDIMENT TO HER FRENCH FRIES. YELLOW JACKETS SWARMED AROUND A POPSYCLE IN THE OVER FLOWING TRASH CAN AVOID BEING STUNG AWAY FOR JUST A MOMENT TO UP AND SHE TO THE CROWD, FOR EVER A MEMBER BE VISITED IN MY GREEN NYLON GYM SHORTS. YOUR FRIEND SEAN





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